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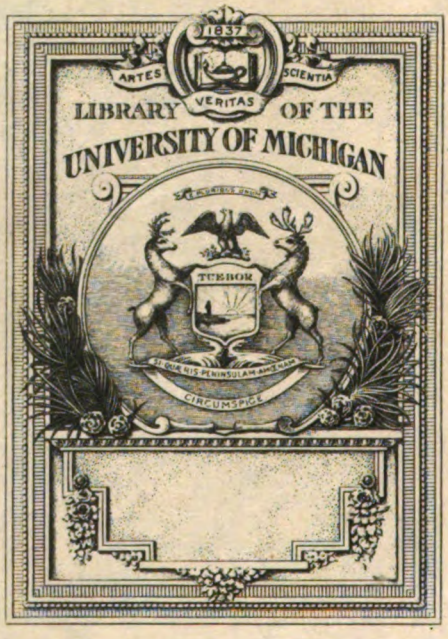
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JULY TO DECEMBER

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JULY

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THE RETURN OF PROFESSOR CHALLENGER

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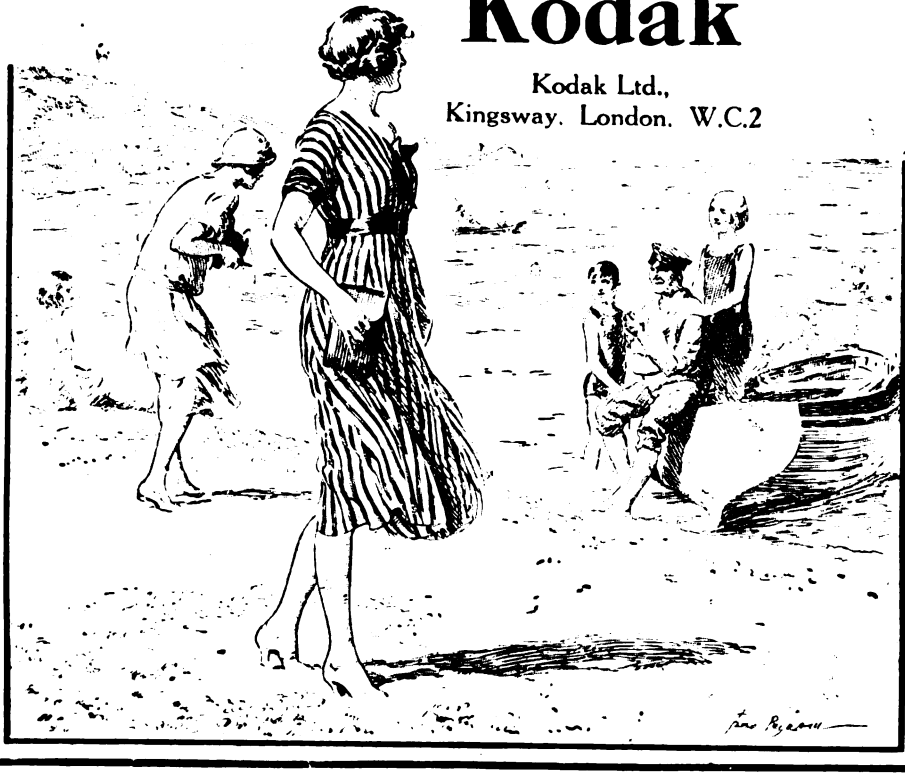

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for July, 1925.

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The STRAND MAGAZINE

JULY, 1925.

THE LAND OF MIST

or,

The Quest of Edward Malone

By

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

IN this month's issue we begin a serial which will, we venture to say, attract world-wide interest. It deals with the borderland of human knowledge and experience which fades away into "The Land of Mist."

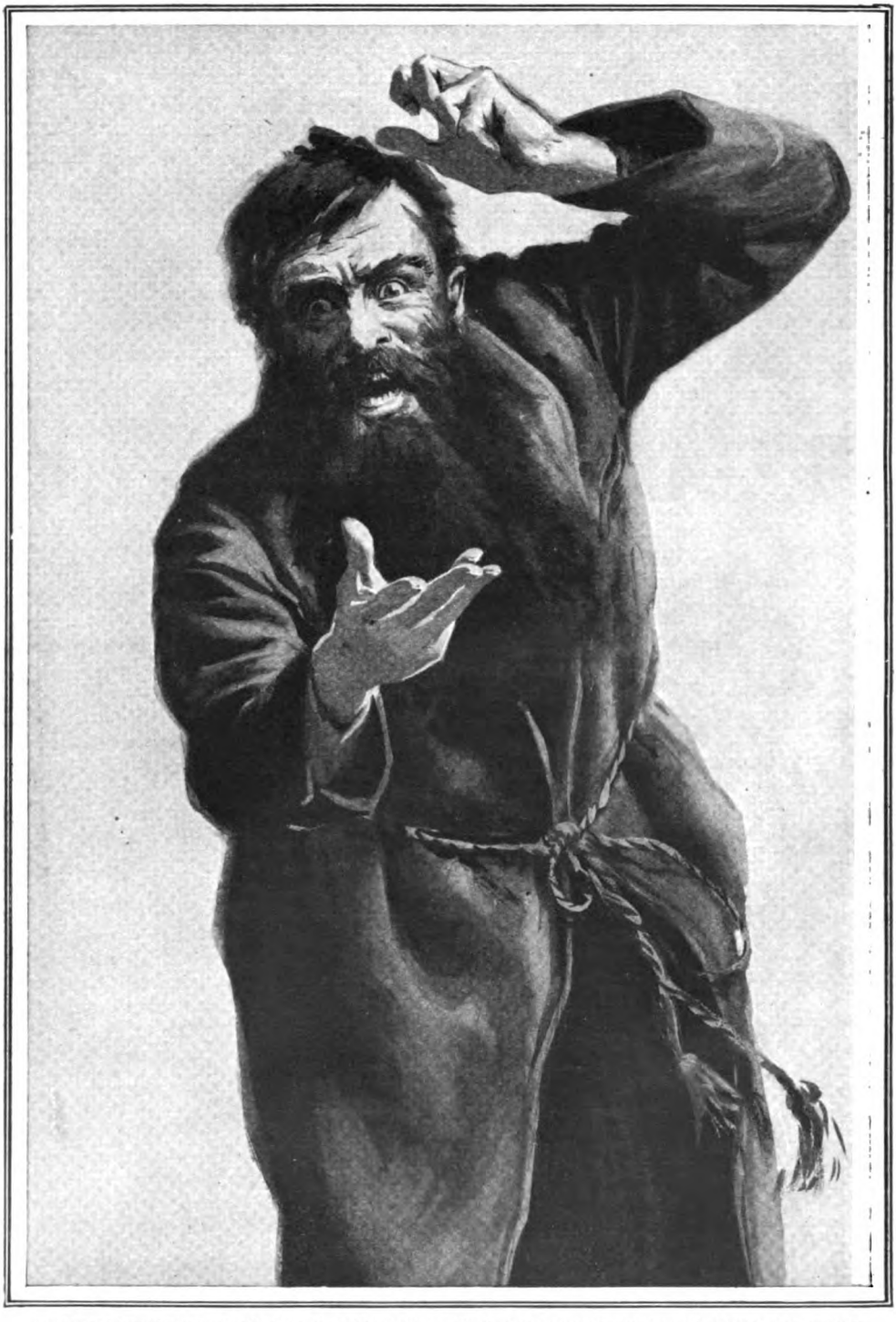
Whether one agrees or disagrees, it is an undoubted fact that psychic questions are before the world at present as they have never been before. It will also be admitted that our contributor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, can claim an almost unique experience in such matters, having studied them for thirty-six years, and being now elected Honorary President of the French Spiritual Association, which is the central body of the world. He has thrown some of these experiences into narrative form, painting with a full brush both the weakness and the strength of the movement. The false medium is drawn with a relentless accuracy. Many of the almost incredible scenes and incidents which he depicts have, he assures us, either occurred to himself or to those whose testimony cannot be doubted. The whole is executed with that vivid force and sense of drama which have given Sir Arthur his great hold over the public. We venture to think that whatever are the conclusions of the public they will be amazed at the adventures which are still to be encountered in this workaday world.

In conclusion, we may say that our friends of

"THE LOST WORLD" and "THE POISON BELT,"

Professor Challenger,
Lord John Roxton,
and
Mr. Malone,

are among the chief persons of the drama.



PROFESSOR CHALLENGER'S BLACK MANE WAS BRISTLING AND HIS EYES GLARING.
"OH, YES, MALONE, PLAIN SPEAKING IS NEEDED, AND YOU SHALL HAVE IT."

(See page 18.)

The Land of Mist

OR

THE QUEST OF EDWARD MALONE

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

I.

IN WHICH OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER MAKES A START.

THE great Professor Challenger has been—very improperly and imperfectly—used in fiction. A daring author placed him in impossible and romantic situations in order to see how he would react to them. He reacted to the extent of a libel action, an abortive appeal for suppression, a riot in Sloane Street, two personal assaults, and the loss of his position as lecturer upon Physiology at the London School of Sub-Tropical Hygiene. Otherwise, the matter passed more peaceably than might have been expected.

But he was losing something of his fire. Those huge shoulders were a little bowed. The spade-shaped Assyrian beard showed tangles of grey amid the black, his eyes were a trifle less aggressive, his smile less self-complacent, his voice as monstrous as ever but less ready to roar down all opposition. Yet he was dangerous, as all around him were painfully aware. The volcano was not extinct and constant rumblings threatened some new explosion. Life had much yet to teach him, but he was a little less intolerant in learning.

There was a definite date for the change which had been wrought in him. It was the death of his wife. That little bird of a woman had made her nest in the big man's heart. He had all the tenderness and chivalry which the strong can have for the weak. By yielding everything she had won everything, as a sweet-natured, tactful woman can. And when she died suddenly from virulent pneumonia following influenza, the man staggered and went down. He came up again, smiling ruefully like the stricken boxer, and ready to carry on for many a round with Fate. But he was not the same man, and if it had not been for the help and comradeship of his daughter Enid he might have never rallied from the blow. She it was who, with clever craft, lured him into every subject which would excite his combative nature and infuriate his mind, until he lived once more in the present and not the past. It was only when she saw him turbulent in controversy, violent to Pressmen, and generally offensive to those around him that she felt he was really in a fair way to recovery.

Enid Challenger was a remarkable girl, and should have a paragraph to herself. With the raven-black hair of her father, and the blue eyes and fresh colour of her mother, she was striking, if not beautiful, in appearance. She was quiet, but she was very strong. From her infancy she had either to take her own part against her father, or else to consent to be crushed and to become a mere automaton worked by his strong fingers. She was strong enough to hold her own in a gentle, elastic fashion, which bent to his moods and reasserted itself when they were past. Lately she had felt the constant pressure too oppressive, and she had relieved

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it by feeling out for a career of her own. She did occasional odd jobs for the London Press, and did them in such fashion that her name was beginning to be known in Fleet Street. In finding this opening she had been greatly helped by an old friend of her father—and possibly of the reader—Mr. Edward Malone of *The Daily Gazette*.

Malone was still the same athletic Irishman who had once won his International cap at Rugby, but life had toned him down also and made him a more subdued and thoughtful man. He had put away a good deal when last his football boots had been packed away for good. His muscles may have wilted and his joints stiffened, but his mind was deeper and more active. The boy was dead and the man was born. In person he had altered little, but his moustache was heavier, his back a little rounded, and some lines of thought were tracing themselves upon his brow. Post-war conditions and new world problems had left their mark. For the rest he had made his name in journalism and even to a small degree in literature. He was still a bachelor, though there were some who thought that his hold on that condition was precarious, and that Miss Enid Challenger's little white fingers could disengage it. Certainly they were very good chums.

It was a Sunday evening in October, and the lights were just beginning to twinkle out through the fog which had shrouded London from early morning. Professor Challenger's flat at Victoria West Gardens was upon the third floor, and the mist lay thick upon the windows, while the low hum of the attenuated Sunday traffic rose up from an invisible highway beneath, which was outlined only by scattered patches of dull radiance. Professor Challenger sat with his thick, bandy legs outstretched to the fire, and his hands thrust deeply into his trouser pockets. His dress had a little of the eccentricity of genius, for he wore a loose-collared shirt, a large knotted maroon-coloured silk tie, and a black velvet smoking-jacket, which, with his flowing beard, gave him the appearance of an elderly and Bohemian artist. On one side of him, ready for an excursion, with bowl hat, short-skirted dress of black, and all the other fashionable devices with which women contrive to deform the beauties of Nature, there sat his daughter, while Malone, hat in hand, waited by the window.

"I think we should get off, Enid. It is nearly seven," said he.

They were writing joint articles upon the religious denominations of London, and on each Sunday evening they sallied out together to sample some new one and

get copy for the weekly edition of the *Gazette*.

"It's not till eight, Ted. We have lots of time."

'Sit down, sir! Sit down!" boomed Challenger, tugging at his beard, as was his habit if his temper was rising. "There is nothing annoys me more than having anyone standing behind me. A relic of atavism and the fear of a dagger, but still persistent. That's right. For Heaven's sake put your hat down! You have a perpetual air of catching a train."

"That's the journalistic life," said Malone. "If we don't catch the perpetual train we get left. Even Enid is beginning to understand that. But still, as you say, there is time enough."

Challenger snorted like an angry buffalo. "You don't mean to tell me, Malone, that these ghost people have got churches of their own?"

"How far have you got?" asked Challenger.

Enid consulted a business-like little reporter's notebook.

"We have done six. There was Westminster Abbey for the Church in its most picturesque form, and Saint Agatha for the High Church, and Tudor Place for the Low. Then there was the Westminster Cathedral for Catholics, Endell Street for Presbyterians, and Gloucester Square for Unitarians. But to-night we are trying to introduce some variety. We are doing the Spiritualists."

Challenger snorted like an angry buffalo.

"Next week the lunatic asylums, I presume," said he. "You don't mean to tell me, Malone, that these ghost people have got churches of their own?"

"I've been looking into that," said Malone. "I always look up cold facts and figures before I tackle a job. They have over four hundred registered churches in Great Britain."

Challenger's snorts now sounded like the whole herd of buffaloes.

"There seems to me to be absolutely no limit to the inanity and credulity of the human race. *Homo sapiens! Homo idioticus!* Whom do they pray to—the ghosts?"

"Well, that's what we want to find out. We should get some copy out of them. I need not say that I share your view entirely, but I've seen something of Atkinson of St. Mary's Hospital lately. He is a rising surgeon, you know."

"I've heard of him—cerebro-spinal."

"That's the man. He is level-headed and is looked on as an authority on psychic research, as they call the new science which deals with these matters."

"Science, indeed!"

"Well, that is what they call it. He seems to take these people seriously. I consult him when I want a reference, for he has the literature at his fingers' ends. 'Pioneers of the Human Race'—that was his description."

"Pioneering them to Bedlam," growled Challenger. "And literature! What literature have they?"

"Well, that was another surprise. Atkinson has five hundred volumes, but complains that his psychic library is very imperfect. You see, there is French, German, Italian, as well as our own."

"Well, thank God all the folly is not confined to poor old England. Pestilential nonsense!"

"Have you read it up at all, father?" asked Enid.

"Read it up! I, with all my interests and no time for one-half of them! Enid, you are too absurd."

"Sorry, father. You spoke with such assurance, I thought you knew something about it."

Challenger's huge head swung round and his lion's glare rested upon his daughter.

"Do you conceive that a logical brain, a brain of the first order, needs to read and to study before it can detect a manifest absurdity? Am I to study mathematics in order to confute the man who tells me that two and two are five. Must I study physics once more and take down my *Principia* because some rogue or fool insists that a table can rise in the air against the law of gravity? Does it take five hundred volumes to inform us of a thing which is proved in every police-court when an impostor is exposed? Enid, I am ashamed of you!"

His daughter laughed merrily.

"Well, Dad, you need not roar at me any more. I give in. In fact, I have the same feeling that you have."

"None the less," said Malone, "some good men support them. I don't see that you can laugh at Lodge and Crookes and the others."

"Don't be absurd, Malone. Every great mind has its weaker side. It is a sort of reaction against all the good sense. You come suddenly upon a vein of positive nonsense. That is what is the matter with these fellows. No, Enid, I haven't read their reasons, and I don't mean to, either; some things are beyond the pale. If we re-open all the old questions, how can we ever get ahead with the new ones? This matter is settled by common sense, by the law of England, and by the universal assent of every sane European."

"So that's that!" said Enid.

"However," he continued, "I can admit that there are occasional excuses for misunderstandings upon the point." He sank his voice, and his great grey eyes looked sadly up into vacancy. "I have known cases where the coldest intellect—even my own intellect—might, for a moment, have been shaken."

Malone scented copy.

"Yes, sir?"

CHALLENGER hesitated. He seemed to be struggling with himself. He wished to speak, and yet speech was painful. Then, with an abrupt, impatient gesture, he plunged into his story:—

"I never told you, Enid. It was too—too intimate. Perhaps too absurd. I was ashamed to have been so shaken. But it shows how even the best balanced may be caught unawares."

"Yes, sir?"

"It was after my wife's death. You knew her, Malone. You can guess what it meant to me. It was the night after the cremation—horrible, Malone, horrible! I saw the dear little body slide down, down—and then the glare of flame and the door clanged to." His great body shook and he passed his big hairy hand over his eyes.

"I don't know why I tell you this; the talk seemed to lead up to it. It may be a warning to you. That night—the night after the cremation—I sat up in the hall. She was there," he nodded at Enid. "She had fallen asleep in a chair, poor girl. You know the house at Rotherfield, Malone. It was in the big hall. I sat by the fireplace,

the room all draped in shadow, and my mind draped in shadow also. I should have sent her to bed, but she was lying back in her chair and I did not wish to wake her. It may have been one in the morning—I remember the moon shining through the stained-glass window. I sat and I brooded. Then suddenly there came a noise."

"Yes, sir?"

"It was low at first—just a ticking. Then it grew louder and more distinct—it was a clear rat-tat-tat. Now comes the queer coincidence, the sort of thing out of which legends grow when credulous folk have the shaping of them. You must know that my wife had a peculiar way of knocking at a door. It was really a little tune which she played with her fingers. I got into the same way so that we could each know when the other knocked. Well, it seemed to me—of course my mind was strained and abnormal—that the taps shaped themselves into the well-known rhythm of her knock. I couldn't localize it. You can think how eagerly I tried. It was above me, somewhere on the woodwork. I lost sense of time. I dare say it was repeated a dozen times at least."

"Oh, Dad, you never told me!"

"No, but I woke you up. I asked you to sit quiet with me for a little."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, we sat, but nothing happened. Not a sound more. Of course, it was a delusion. Some insect in the wood; the ivy on the outer wall. My own brain furnished the rhythm. Thus do we make fools and children of ourselves. But it gave me an insight. I saw how even a clever man could be deceived by his own emotions."

"But how do you know, sir, that it was *not* your wife?"

"Absurd, Malone! Absurd, I say! I tell you I saw her in the flames. What was there left?"

"Her soul, her spirit."

Challenger shook his head sadly.

"When that dear body dissolved into its elements—when its gases went into the air and its residue of solids sank into a grey dust—it was the end. There was no more. She had played her part, played it beautifully, nobly. It was done. Death ends all, Malone. This soul-talk is the animism of savages. It is a superstition, a myth. As a physiologist I will undertake to produce crime or virtue by vascular control or cerebral stimulation. I will turn a Jekyll into a Hyde by a surgical operation. Another can do it by a psychological suggestion. Alcohol will do it. Drugs will do it. Absurd, Malone, absurd! As the tree falls, so does it lie. There is no next morning . . . night—eternal night . . . and long rest for the weary worker."

"Well, it's a sad philosophy."

"Better a sad than a false one."

"Perhaps so. There is something virile and manly in facing the worst. I would not contradict. My reason is with you."

"But my instincts are against!" cried Enid. "No, no, never can I believe it." She threw her arms round the great bull neck. "Don't tell me, Daddy, that you, with all your complex brain and wonderful self, are a thing with no more life hereafter than a broken clock!"

"Four buckets of water and a bagful of salts," said Challenger as he smilingly detached his daughter's grip. "That's your Daddy, my lass, and you may as well reconcile your mind to it. Well, it's twenty to eight. Come back, if you can, Malone, and let me hear your adventures among the insane!"

II.

WHICH DESCRIBES AN EVENING IN STRANGE COMPANY.

THE love-affair of Enid Challenger and Edward Malone is not of the slightest interest to the reader, for the simple reason that it is not of the slightest interest to the writer. The unseen, unnoticed lure of the unborn babe is common to all youthful humanity. We deal in this chronicle with matters which are less common and of higher interest. It is only mentioned in order to explain those terms of frank and intimate comradeship which the narrative discloses. If the human race has obviously improved in anything—in Anglo-Celtic countries, at least—it is that the prim affectations and sly deceits of the past are lessened and that young men and women can meet in an equality of clean and honest comradeship.

A taxi took the adventurers down Edgware Road and into the side-street called Helbeck Terrace. Half-way down, the dull line of brick houses was broken by one glowing gap, where an open arch threw a flood of light into the street. The cab pulled up and the man opened the door.

"This is the Spiritualist church, sir," said he. Then, as he saluted to acknowledge his tip, he added in the wheezy voice of the man of all weathers: "Tommy-rot, I calls it,

sir." Having eased his conscience thus, he climbed into his seat and a moment later his red rear-lamp was a waning circle in the gloom. Malone laughed.

"*Vox populi*, Enid. That is as far as the public has got at present."

"Well, it is as far as we have got, for that matter."

"Yes, but we are prepared to give them a show. I don't suppose cabby is. By Jove, it will be hard luck if we can't get in!"

There was a crowd at the door and a man was facing them from the top of the steps, waving his arms to keep them back.

"It's no good, friends. I am very sorry, but we can't help it. We've been threatened twice with prosecution for overcrowding." He turned facetious. "Never heard of an Orthodox Church getting into trouble for that. No, sir, no."

"I've come all the way from Brixton," wailed a voice. The light beat upon the eager, anxious face of the speaker, a little woman in black with a baby in her arms.

"You've come for clairvoyance, mam," said the usher, with intelligence. "See here, give me the name and address and I will write you, and Mrs. Debbs may give you a sitting gratis. That's better than taking your chance in the crowd when, with all the will in the world, they can't all get a turn. You'll have her to yourself. No, sir, there's no use shovin'. What's that? Press?"

He had caught Malone by the elbow.

"Did you say Press? The Press boycott us, sir. Look at the weekly list of services in a Saturday's *Times*, if you doubt it. You wouldn't know there was such a thing as Spiritualism. What paper, sir? *The Daily Gazette?* Well, well, we are getting on. And the lady, too? Special article—my word! Stick to me, sir, and I'll see what I can do. Shut the doors, Joe. No use, friends. When the building fund gets on a bit we'll have more room for you. Now, miss, this way, if you please."

This way proved to be down the street and round a side-alley which brought them to a small door with a red lamp shining above it.

"I'll have to put you on the platform—there's no standing room in the body of the hall."

"Good gracious!" cried Enid.

"You'll have a fine view, miss, and maybe get a readin' for yourself if you're lucky. It often happens that those nearest the medium get the best chance. Now, sir, in here!"

HERE was a frowzy little room with some hats and top-coats draping the dirty whitewashed walls. A thin, austere woman, with eyes which gleamed from behind her glasses, was warming her gaunt hands over a small fire. With his back to the fire in the traditional British attitude was a large, fat man with a bloodless face, a ginger moustache, and curious light blue eyes—the eyes of a deep-sea mariner. A little bald-headed man with huge horn-rimmed spectacles, and a very handsome and athletic youth in a blue lounge suit, completed the group.

"The others has gone on the platform, Mr. Peeble. There's only five seats left for ourselves." It was the fat man talking.

"I know, I know," said the man who had been addressed as Peeble, a nervous, stringy, dried-up person as he now appeared in the light. "But this is the Press, Mr. Bolsover. *Daily Gazette*—special article. Malone the name, and Challenger. This is Mr. Bolsover, our President. This is Mrs. Debbs of Liverpool, the famous clairvoyante. Here is Mr. James, and this tall young gentleman is Mr. Hardy Williams, our energetic secretary. Mr. Williams is a nailer for the buildin' fund. Keep your eye on your pockets if Mr. Williams is around."

They all laughed.

"Collection comes later," said Mr. Williams, smiling.

"A good rousing article is our best collection," said the stout President. "Ever been to a meeting before, sir?"

"No," said Malone.

"Don't know much about it, I expect?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, well, we must expect a slating. They get it from the humorous angle at first. We'll have you writing a very comic account. I never could see anything very funny in the spirit of one's dead wife, but it's a matter of taste and of knowledge also. If they don't know, how can they take it seriously? I don't blame them. We were mostly like that ourselves once. I was one of Bradlaugh's men, and sat under Joseph MacCabe, until my old dad came and pulled me out."

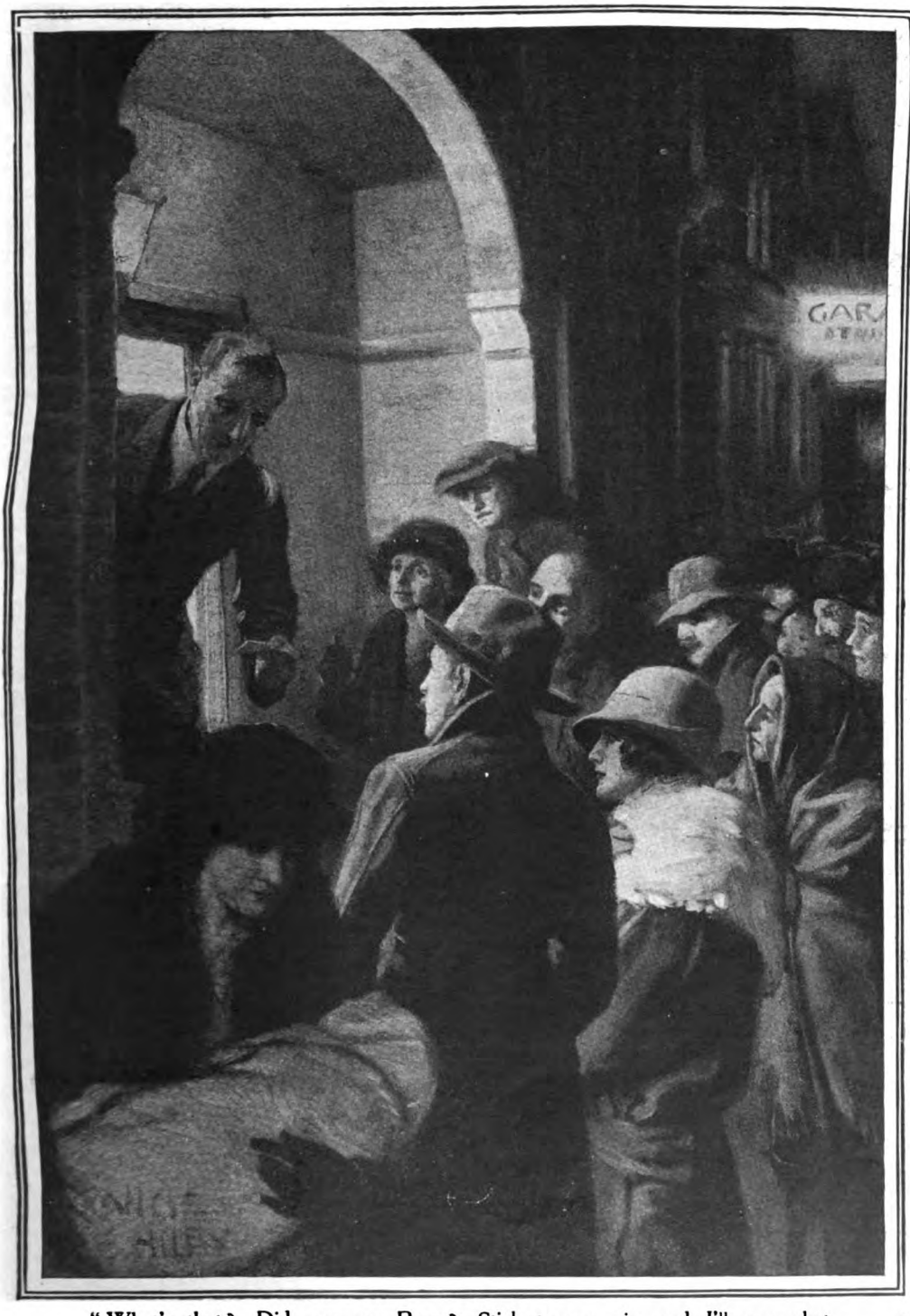
"Good for him!" said the Liverpool medium.

"It was the first time I found I had powers of my own. I saw him like I see you now."

"Was he one of us in the body?"

"Knew no more than I did. But they come on amazin' at the other side if the right folk get hold of them."

"Time's up!" said Mr. Peeble, snapping his watch. "You are on the right of the Chair, Mrs. Debbs. Will you go first? Then you, Mr. Chairman. Then you two and myself. Get on the left, Mr. Hardy Williams, and lead the singin'. They want warmin' up and you can do it. Now, then, if *you* please!"



"What's that? Did you say Press? Stick to me, sir, and I'll see what I can do."

The platform was already crowded, but the new-comers threaded their way to the front amid a decorous murmur of welcome. Mr. Peeble shoved and exhorted and two end seats emerged upon which Enid and Malone perched themselves. The arrangement suited them well, for they could use their notebooks freely behind the shelter of the folk in front.

"What is your reaction?" whispered Enid.

"Not impressed as yet."

"No, nor I," said Enid, "but it's very interesting all the same."

PEOPLE who are in earnest are always interesting, whether you agree with them or not, and it was impossible to doubt that these people were extremely earnest. The hall was crammed, and as one looked down one saw line after line of upturned faces, curiously alike in type, women predominating, but men running them close. That type was not distinguished nor intellectual, but it was undeniably healthy, honest, and sane. Small tradesfolk, male and female shopwalkers, better-class artisans, lower middle-class women worn with household cares, occasional young folk in search of a sensation—these were the impressions which the audience conveyed to the trained observation of Malone.

The fat President rose and raised his hand.

"My friends," said he, "we have had once more to exclude a great number of people who desired to be with us to-night. It's all a question of the building fund, and Mr. Williams on my left will be glad to hear from any of you. I was in an hotel last week and they had a notice hung up in the reception bureau: 'No cheques accepted.' That's not the way Brother Williams talks. You just try him."

The audience laughed. The atmosphere was clearly that of the lecture-hall rather than of the Church.

"There's just one more thing I want to say before I sit down. I'm not here to talk. I'm here to hold this chair down, and I mean to do it. It's a hard thing I ask. I want Spiritualists to keep away on Sunday nights. They take up the room that inquirers should have. You can have the morning service. But it's better for the cause that there should be room for the stranger. You've had it. Thank God for it. Give the other man a chance." The President plumped back into his chair.

Mr. Peeble sprang to his feet. He was clearly the general utility man who emerges in every society and probably becomes its autocrat. With his thin, eager face and darting hands he was more than a live wire—he was a whole bundle of live wires. Electricity seemed to crackle from his finger-tips.

"'Ym One!" he shrieked.

A harmonium droned and the audience rose. It was a fine hymn and lustily sung:—

"The world hath felt a quickening breath
From Heaven's eternal shore,
And souls triumphant over death
Return to earth once more."

There was a ring of exultation in the voices as the refrain rolled out:—

"For this we hold our Jubilee,
For this with joy we sing,
'Oh, Grave, where is thy victory,
Oh, Death, where is thy sting?'"

Yes, they were in earnest, these people. And they did not appear to be mentally weaker than their fellows. And yet both Enid and Malone felt a sensation of great pity as they looked at them. How sad to be deceived upon so intimate a matter as this, to be duped by impostors who used their most sacred feelings and their beloved dead as counters with which to cheat them! What did they know of the laws of evidence, of the cold immutable decrees of scientific law? Poor earnest, honest, deluded people!

"Now!" screamed Mr. Peeble. "We shall ask Mr. Munro from Australia to give us the invocation."

A wild-looking old man with a shaggy beard and slumbering fire in his eyes rose and stood for a few seconds, with his gaze cast down. Then he began a prayer, very simple, very unpremeditated. Malone jotted down the first sentence: "O Father, we are very ignorant folk and do not well know how to approach You, but we will pray to You the best we know how." It was all cast in that humble key. Enid and Malone exchanged a swift glance of appreciation.

There was another hymn, less successful than the first, and the Chairman then announced that Mr. James Jones, of North Shields, would now deliver a trance address which would embody the views of his well-known control, Alasha the Atlantean.

Mr. James Jones, a brisk and decided little man in a faded check suit, came to the front, and, after standing a minute or so as if in deep thought, gave a violent shudder and began to talk. It must be admitted that, save for a certain fixed stare and vacuous glazing of the eye, there was nothing to show that anything save Mr. James Jones, of North Shields, was the orator. It has also to be stated that if Mr. Jones shuddered at the beginning it was the turn of his audience to shudder afterwards. Granting his

own claim, he had proved clearly that an Atlantean spirit might be a portentous bore. He droned on with platitudes and ineptitudes while Malone whispered to Enid that if Alasha was a fair specimen of the population, it was just as well that his native land was safely engulfed in the Atlantic Ocean. When, with another rather melodramatic shudder, he emerged from his trance, the Chairman sprang to his feet with an alacrity which showed that he was taking no risks lest the Atlantean should return.

" We have present with us to-night," he cried, " Mrs. Debbs, the well-known clairvoyante of Liverpool. Mrs. Debbs is, as many of you know, richly endowed with several of those gifts of the spirit of which St. Paul speaks, and the discerning of spirits is among them. These things depend upon laws which are beyond our control, but a sympathetic atmosphere is essential, and Mrs. Debbs will ask for your good wishes and your prayers while she endeavours to get into touch with some of those shining ones on the other side who may honour us with their presence to-night."

THE President sat down, and Mrs. Debbs rose amid discreet applause. Very tall, very pale, very thin, with an aquiline face and eyes shining brightly from behind her gold-rimmed glasses, she stood facing her expectant audience. Her head was bent. She seemed to be listening.

" Vibrations ! " she cried at last. " I want helpful vibrations. Give me a verse on the harmonium, please."

The instrument droned out " Jesu, Lover of My Soul." The audience sat in silence, expectant and a little awed. The hall was not too well lit, and dark shadows lurked in the corners. The medium still bent her head as if her ears were straining. Then she raised her hand and the music stopped.

" Presently ! Presently ! All in good time," said the woman, addressing some invisible companion. Then to the audience, " I don't feel that the conditions are very good to-night. I will do my best, and so will they. But I must talk to you first."

And she talked. What she said seemed to the two strangers to be absolute gabble. There was no consecutive sense in it, though now and again a phrase or sentence caught the attention. Malone put his stylo in his pocket. There was no use reporting a lunatic. A Spiritualist next him saw his bewildered disgust and leaned towards him.

" She's tuning in. She's getting her wavelength," he whispered. " It's all a matter of vibration. Ah, there you are ! "

She had stopped in the very middle of a sentence. Her long arm was quivering and her forefinger shot out. She was pointing at an elderly woman in the second row.

" You ! Yes, you with the red feather. No, not you. The stout lady in front. Yes, you ! There is a spirit building up behind you. It is a man. He is a tall man—six foot, maybe. High forehead, eyes grey or blue, a long chin, brown moustache, lines on his face. Do you recognize him, friend ? "

The stout woman looked alarmed, but shook her head.

' Well, see if I can help you. He is holding up a book—brown book with a clasp. It's a ledger, same as they have in offices. I get the words, ' Caledonian Insurance.' Is that any help ? "

The stout woman pursed her lips and shook her head vigorously.

" Well, I can give you a little more. He died after a long illness. I get chest trouble —asthma."

The stout woman was still obdurate, but a small, angry, red-faced person, two places away from her, sprang to her feet.

" It's my 'usband, mam. Tell 'im I don't want to 'ave any more dealin's with him." She sat down with decision.

" Yes, that's right. He moves to you now. He was nearer the other. He wants to say he's sorry. It doesn't do, you know, to have hard feelings to the dead. Forgive and forget. It's all over. I get a message for you. It is : ' Do it and my blessing go with you ! ' Does that mean anything to you ? "

The angry woman looked pleased and nodded.

" Very good." The clairvoyante suddenly darted out her finger towards the crowd at the door. " It's for the soldier."

A soldier in khaki, looking very much amazed, was in the front of the knot of people.

" Wot's for me ? " he asked.

" It's a soldier. He has a corporal's stripes. He is a big man with grizzled hair. He has a yellow tab on his shoulders. I get the initials J. H. Do you know him ? "

" Yes—but he's dead," said the soldier.

He had not understood that it was a Spiritualistic church, and the whole proceedings had been a mystery to him. They were rapidly explained by his neighbours. " My Gawd ! " cried the soldier, and vanished amid a general titter. In the pause Malone could hear the constant mutter of the medium as she spoke to someone unseen.

" Yes, yes, wait your turn ! Speak up, woman ! Well, take your place near him. How should I know ? Well, I will if I can." She was like a janitor at the theatre marshalling a queue.

Her next attempt was a total failure. A solid man with bushy side-whiskers absolutely refused to have anything to do with an elderly gentleman who claimed kinship. The medium worked with admirable patience, coming back again and again with some fresh detail, but no progress could be made.

"Are you a Spiritualist, friend?"

"Yes, for ten years."

"Well, you know there are difficulties?"

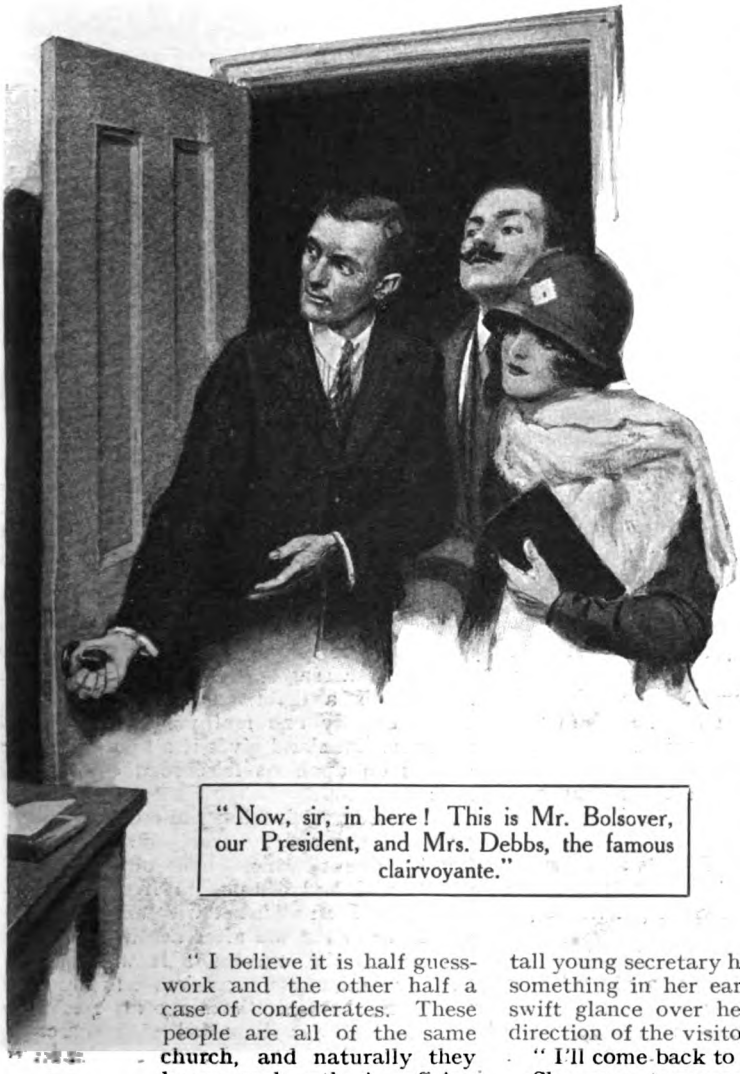
"Yes, I know that."

"Think it over. It may come to you later. We must just leave it at that. I am only sorry for your friend."

There was a pause during which Enid and Malone exchanged whispered confidences.

"What do you make of it, Enid?"

"I don't know. It confuses me."



"Now, sir, in here! This is Mr. Bolsover, our President, and Mrs. Debbs, the famous clairvoyante."

"I believe it is half guesswork and the other half a case of confederates. These people are all of the same church, and naturally they know each other's affairs. If they don't know they can inquire."

"Someone said it was Mrs. Debbs's first visit."

"Yes, but they could easily coach her up. It is all clever quackery and bluff. It *must* be, for just think what is implied if it is not."

"Telepathy, perhaps."

"Yes, some element of that also. Listen! She is off again."

Her next attempt was more fortunate. A lugubrious man at the back of the hall readily recognized the description and claims of his deceased wife.

"I get the name Walter."

"Yes, that's me."

"She called you Wat?"

"No."

"Well, she calls you Wat now. 'Tell Wat to give my love to the children.' That's how I get it. She is worrying about the children."

"She always did."

"Well, they don't change. Furniture. Something about furniture. She says you gave it away. Is that right?"

"Well, I might as well."

The audience tittered. It was strange how the most solemn and the comic were eternally blended—strange and yet very natural and human.

"She has a message: 'The man will pay up and all will be well. Be a good man, Wat, and we will be happier here than ever we were on earth.'"

The man put his hand over his eyes. As the seeress stood irresolute the tall young secretary half rose and whispered something in her ear. The woman shot a swift glance over her left shoulder in the direction of the visitors.

"I'll come back to it," said she.

She gave two more descriptions to the audience, both of them rather vague, and both recognized with some reservations. It was a curious fact that her details were such as she could not possibly see at the distance. Thus, dealing with a form which she claimed had built up at the far end of the hall, she could none the less give the colour of the eyes and small points of the face. Malone noted the point as one which he could use for destructive criticism. He was just jotting it down when the woman's voice sounded louder and, looking up, he found that she had turned her head and her spectacles were flashing in his direction.

"It is not often I give a reading from the platform," said she, her face rotating between him and the audience, "but we have

friends here to-night, and it may interest them to come in contact with the spirit people. There is a presence building up behind the gentleman with a moustache—the gentleman who sits next to the young lady. Yes, sir, behind you. He is a man of middle size, rather inclined to shortness. He is old, over sixty, with white hair, curved nose, and a white small beard of the variety that is called goatee. He is no relation, I gather, but a friend. Does that suggest anyone to you, sir ? "

Malone shook his head with some contempt. " It would fit nearly any old man," he whispered to Enid.

" We will try to get a little closer. He has deep lines on his face. I should say he was an irritable man in his lifetime. He was quick and nervous in his ways. Does that help you ? "

Again Malone shook his head.

" Rot ! Perfect rot ! " he muttered.

" Well, he seems very anxious, so we must do what we can for him. He holds up a book. It is a learned book. He opens it and I see diagrams in it. Perhaps he wrote it—or perhaps he taught from it. Yes, he nods. He taught from it. He was a teacher."

Malone remained unresponsive.

" I don't know that I can help him any more. Ah ! there is one thing. He has a mole over his right eyebrow."

Malone started as if he had been stung.

" My God ! " gasped Malone. " It's Professor Summerlee ! "

" Ah, you've got it. There's a message : ' Greetings to old ——' It's a long name and begins with a C. I can't get it. Does it mean anything ? "

" Yes."

In an instant she had turned and was describing something for someone else. But she had left a badly-shaken man upon the platform behind her. Presently she sat down.

IT was at this point that the orderly service had a remarkable interruption which surprised the audience as much as it did the two visitors. This was the sudden appearance beside the Chairman of a tall, pale-faced, bearded man dressed like a superior artisan, who held up his hand with a quietly impressive gesture as one who was accustomed to exert authority. He then half-turned and said a word to Mr. Bolsover.

" This is Mr. Miromar, of Dalston," said the Chairman. " Mr. Miromar has a message to deliver. We are always glad to hear from Mr. Miromar."

The reporters could only get a half-view of the new-comer's face, but both of them were struck by his noble bearing and by the massive outline of his head, which promised very unusual intellectual power. His voice when he spoke rang clearly and pleasantly through the hall.

" I have been ordered to give the message wherever I think that there are ears to hear it. There are some here who are ready for it, and that is why I have come. They wish that the human race should gradually understand the situation so that there shall be the less shock or panic. I am one of several who are chosen to carry the news."

" A lunatic, I'm afraid ! " whispered Malone, scribbling hard upon his knee. There was a general inclination to smile among the audience. And yet there was something in the man's manner and voice which made them hang on every word.

" God sends His knowledge in instalments. There was the old heathen knowledge. It was the worship of elementals. Then came the Jewish single God, and then the Christ idea of love. These were all instalments.

" But things have again reached a climax. The very idea of progress has been made material. It is progress to go swiftly, to send swift messages, to build new machinery. All this is a diversion of real ambition. There is only one real progress—spiritual progress. Mankind gives it a lip tribute, but presses on upon its false road of material science.

" The Central Intelligence recognized that amid all the apathy there was also much honest doubt which had outgrown old creeds and had a right to fresh evidence. Therefore fresh evidence was sent—evidence which made the life after death as clear as the sun in the heavens. It was laughed at by scientists, condemned by the Churches, became the butt of the newspapers, and was discarded with contempt. That was the last and greatest blunder of humanity."

The audience had their chins up now. General speculations were beyond their mental horizon. But this was very clear to their comprehension. There was a murmur of sympathy and applause.

" The thing was now hopeless. It had got beyond all control. Therefore something sterner was needed since Heaven's last gift had been disregarded. The blow fell. Ten million young men were laid dead upon the ground. Twice as many were mutilated. That was the first warning to mankind. But it was vain. The same dull materialism prevailed as before. Years of grace were given, and save the stirrings of the spirit seen in such churches as these, no change was anywhere to be seen. The nations heaped up fresh loads of sin, and sin must

ever be atoned for. Russia became a cesspool. Germany was unrepentant of her terrible materialism, which had been the prime cause of the war. Spain and Italy were sunk in alternate atheism and superstition. France had no religious ideal. Britain was confused and distracted, full of wooden sects which had nothing of life in them. America had abused her glorious opportunities, and, instead of being the loving younger brother to a stricken Europe, she held up all economic reconstruction by her money claims; she dishonoured the signature of her own President, and she refused to join that League of Peace which was the one hope of the future. All have sinned, but some more than others, and their punishment will be in exact proportion.

"And that punishment now comes. These are the exact words I have been asked to give you. I read them lest I should in any way garble them."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket and read:—

"What we want is, not that folk should be frightened, but that they should begin to change themselves—to develop themselves on more spiritual lines. We are not trying to make people nervous, but to prepare while there is yet time. The world cannot go on as it has done. It would destroy itself if it did. But we must sweep away the terrible cloud of theology which has risen between mankind and God."

He folded up the paper and replaced it in his pocket.

"That is what I have been asked to tell you. Spread the news where there seems to be a window in the soul. Say to them 'Repent! Reform! The time is at hand.'"

He had paused and seemed about to turn. The spell was broken. The audience rustled and leaned back in its seats. Then a voice came from the back.

"Is this the end of the world, mister?"

"No," said the stranger, curtly.

"Is it the Second Coming?" asked another voice.

"Yes."

With quick, light steps he threaded his way among the chairs on the platform and stood near the door. When Malone looked round next he was gone.

"He is one of these Second-Coming fanatics," he whispered to Enid. "There are a lot of them, Christadelphians, Russellites, Bible-students, and what-not. But he was impressive."

"Very," said Enid.

"We have, I am sure, been very interested in what our friend has told us," said the Chairman. "Mr. Miromar is in hearty sympathy with our movement, even though he cannot be said actually to belong to it. I am sure he is always welcome upon our platforms. As to his prophecy, it seems to me the world has had enough trouble without anticipating any more. If it is as our friend says, we can't do much to mend the matter. We can only go about our daily jobs, do them as well as we can, and await the event in full confidence of help from above. If it's the Day of Judgment to-morrow," he added, smiling, "I mean to look after my provision store at Hammersmith to-day. We shall now continue with the service."

THERE was a vigorous appeal for money and a great deal about the building fund from the young secretary. "It's a shame to think that there are more left in the street than in the building on a Sunday night. We all give our services. No one takes a penny. Mrs. Debbs is here for her bare expenses. But we want another thousand pounds before we can start. There is one brother here mortgaged his house to help us. That's the spirit that wins. Now let us see what you can do for us to-night."

A dozen soup-plates circulated, and a hymn was sung to the accompaniment of much chinking of coin. Enid and Malone conversed in undertones.

"Professor Summerlee died, you know, at Naples last year."

"Yes, I remember him well."

"And 'Old C.' was, of course, your father."

"It was really remarkable."

"Poor old Summerlee. He thought survival was an absurdity. And here he is—or here he seems to be."

The soup-plates returned—it was mostly brown soup unhappily—and they were deposited on the table where the eager eye of the secretary appraised their value. Then the little shaggy man from Australia gave a benediction in the same simple fashion as the opening prayer. It needed no Apostolic succession or laying-on of hands to make one feel that his words were from a human heart and might well go straight to a Divine one. Then the audience rose and sang their final farewell hymn—a hymn with a haunting tune and a sad, sweet refrain of "God keep you safely till we meet once more." Enid was surprised to feel the tears running down her cheeks. These earnest simple folks with their direct methods had wrought upon her more than all the gorgeous service and rolling music of the Cathedral.

Mr. Bolsover, the stout President, was in the waiting-room and so was Mrs. Debbs.

"Well, I expect you are going to let us have it," he laughed. "We are used to it,

Mr. Malone. We don't mind. But you will see the turn some day. These articles will rise up in judgment."

"I will treat it fairly, I assure you."

"Well, we ask no more."

The medium was leaning with her elbow on the mantelpiece, austere and aloof.

"I am afraid you are tired," said Enid.

"No, young lady, I am never tired in doing the work of the spirit people. They see to that."

"May I ask," Malone ventured, "whether you ever knew Professor Summerlee?"

The medium shook her head.

"No, sir, no. They always think I know them. I know none of them. They come and I describe them."

'How do you get the message?"

"Clairaudient. I hear it. I hear them all the time. The poor things all want to come through and they pluck at me and pull me and pester me on the platform. 'Me next—me—me!' That's what I hear. I do my best, but I can't handle them all."

"Can you tell me anything of that prophetic person?" asked Malone of the Chairman. Mr. Bolsover shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile.

"He is an Independent. We see him now and again as a sort of comet passing across us. By the way, it comes back to me that he prophesied the war. I'm a practical man myself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. We get plenty in ready cash without any bills for the future. Well, good night! Treat us as well as you can."

"Good night," said Enid.

"Good night," said Mrs. Debbs. "By the way, young lady, you are a medium yourself. Good night!"

And so they found themselves in the street once more inhaling long draughts of the night air. It was sweet after that crowded hall. A minute later they were in the rush of Edgware Road, and Malone had hailed a cab to carry them back to Victoria West Gardens.

III.

IN WHICH PROFESSOR CHALLENGER GIVES HIS OPINION.

ENID had stepped into the cab and Malone was following when his name was called and a man came running down the street. He was tall, middle-aged, handsome and well-dressed, with the clean-shaven, self-confident face of the successful surgeon.

"Hullo, Malone! Stop!"

"Why, it's Atkinson. Enid, let me introduce you. This is Mr. Atkinson, of St. Mary's, about whom I spoke to your father. Can we give you a lift? We are going towards Victoria."

"Capital!" The surgeon followed them into the cab. "I was amazed to see you at a Spiritualist meeting."

"We were only there professionally. Miss Challenger and I are both on the Press."

"Oh, really! *The Daily Gazette*, I suppose, as before? Well, you will have one more subscriber, for I shall want to see what you made of to-night's show."

"You'll have to wait till next week. It is one of a series."

"Oh, I say, I can't wait as long as that. What *did* you make of it?"

"I really don't know. I shall have to read my notes carefully to-morrow and think it over, and compare impressions with my colleague here. She has the intuition, you see, which goes for so much in religious matters."

"And what is your intuition, Miss Challenger?"

"Good—oh, yes, good! But, dear me, what an extraordinary mixture!"

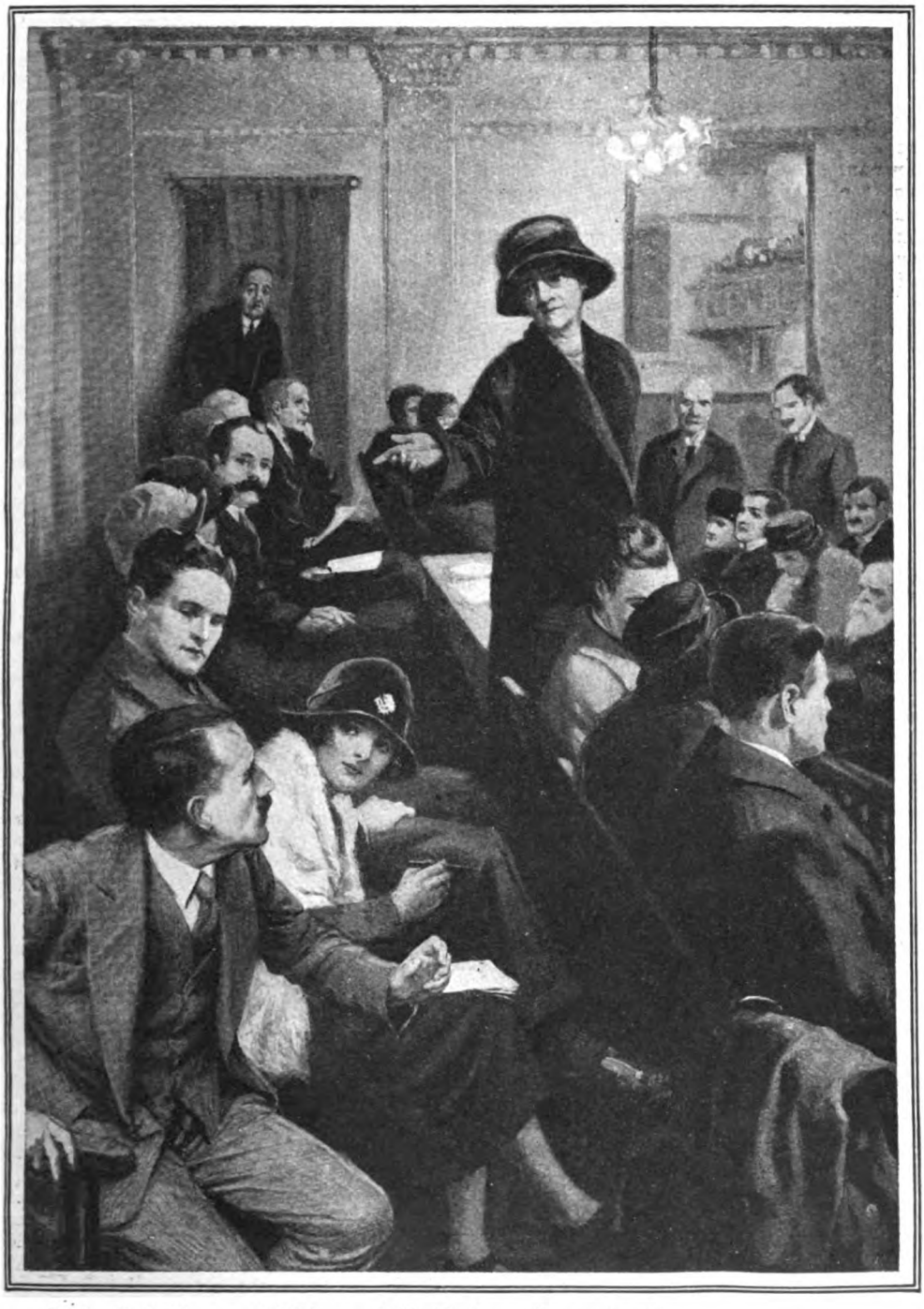
"Yes, indeed. I have been several times, and it always leaves the same mixed impression upon my own mind. Some of it is ludicrous, and some of it might be dishonest, and yet again some of it is clearly wonderful."

"But you are not on the Press. Why were *you* there?"

"Because I am deeply interested. You see, I am a student of psychic matters, and have been for some years. I am not a convinced one, but I am sympathetic, and I have sufficient sense of proportion to realize that while I seem to be sitting in judgment upon the subject it may in truth be the subject which is sitting in judgment upon me."

Malone nodded appreciation.

"It is enormous. You will realize that as you get to close grips with it. It is half-a-dozen great subjects in one. And it is all in the hands of these good humble folk who, in the face of every discouragement and personal loss, have carried it on for more than seventy years. It is really very like the rise of Christianity. It was run by slaves and underlings until it gradually extended upwards. There were three hundred years



"My God!" gasped Malone. "It's Professor Summerlee!"

"Ah, you've got it. There's a message: 'Greetings to old ——' It's a long name and begins with a C. I can't get it. Does it mean anything?" said Mrs. Debbs.

between Cæsar's slave and Cæsar getting the light."

"But the preacher!" cried Enid in protest.

Mr. Atkinson laughed.

"You mean our friend from Atlantis. What a terrible bore the fellow was! I confess I don't know what to make of performances like that. Self-deception, I think, and the temporary emergence of some fresh strand of personality which dramatizes itself in this way. The only thing I am quite sure of is that it is not really an inhabitant of Atlantis who arrives from his long voyage with this awful cargo of platitudes. Well, here we are!"

"I have to deliver this young lady safe and sound to her father," said Malone. "Look here, Atkinson, don't leave us. The Professor would really like to see you."

"What, at this hour! Why, he would throw me down the stairs!"

"You've been hearing stories," said Enid. "Really it is not so bad as that. Some people annoy him, but I am sure you are not one of them. Won't you chance it?"

"With that encouragement, certainly." And the three walked down the bright outer corridor to the lift.

CHALLENGER, clad now in a brilliant blue dressing-gown, was eagerly awaiting them. He eyed Atkinson as a fighting bulldog eyes some canine stranger. The inspection seemed to satisfy him, however, for he growled that he was glad to meet him.

"I've heard of your name, sir, and of your rising reputation. Your resection of the cord last year made some stir, I understand. But have you been down among the lunatics also?"

"Well, if you call them so," said Atkinson, with a laugh.

"Good heavens, what else could I call them? I remember now that my young friend here (Challenger had a way of alluding to Malone as if he were a promising boy of ten) told me you were studying the subject." He roared with offensive laughter. "'The proper study of mankind is spooks,' eh, Mr. Atkinson?"

"Dad really knows nothing about it, so don't be offended with him," said Enid. "But I assure you, Dad, you would have been interested." She proceeded to give a sketch of their adventures, though interrupted by a running commentary of groans, grunts, and derisive jeers. It was only when the Summerlee episode was reached that Challenger's indignation and contempt could no longer be restrained. The old volcano blew its head off and a torrent of red-hot invective descended upon his listeners.

"The blasphemous rascals!" he shouted. "To think that they can't let poor old Summerlee rest in his grave! We had our differences in his time, and I will admit that I was compelled to take a moderate view of his intelligence, but if he came back from the grave he would certainly have something worth hearing to say to us. It is an absurdity—a wicked, indecent absurdity upon the face of it. I object to any friend of mine being made a puppet for the laughter of an audience of fools. They didn't laugh? They *must* have laughed when they heard an educated man, a man whom I have met upon equal terms, talking such nonsense. I say it *was* nonsense. Don't contradict me, Malone. I won't have it! His message might have been the postscript of a schoolgirl's letter. Isn't that nonsense, coming from such a source? Are you not in agreement, Mr. Atkinson? No! I had hoped better things from you."

"But the description?"

"Good heavens, where are your brains? Have not the names of Summerlee and Malone been associated with my own in some peculiarly feeble fiction which attained some notoriety? Is it not also known that you two innocents were doing the Churches week by week? Was it not patent that sooner or later you would come to a Spiritualist gathering? Here was a chance for a convert! They set a bait and poor old gudgeon Malone came along and swallowed it. Here he is with the hook still stuck in his silly mouth. Oh, yes, Malone, plain speaking is needed, and you shall have it." The Professor's black mane was bristling and his eyes glaring from one member of the company to another.

"Well, we want every view expressed," said Atkinson. "You seem very qualified, sir, to express the negative one. At the same time I would repeat in my own person the words of Thackeray. He said to some objector: 'What you say is natural, but if you had seen what I have seen you might alter your opinion.' Perhaps some time you will be able to look into the matter, for your high position in the scientific world would give your opinion great weight."

"If I have a high place in the scientific world, as you say, it is because I have concentrated upon what is useful and discarded what is nebulous or absurd. My brain, sir, does not pare the edges. It cuts right through. It has cut right through this and has found fraud and folly."

"Both are there at times," said Atkinson, "and yet—and yet! Ah, well, Malone, I'm some way from home and it is late. You

will excuse me, Professor. I am honoured to have met you."

Malone was leaving also, and the two friends had a few minutes' chat before they went their separate ways, Atkinson to Wimpole Street and Malone to South Norwood, where he was now living.

"Grand old fellow!" said Malone, chuckling. "You must never get offended with him. He means no harm. He is splendid."

"Of course he is. But if anything could make me a real out-and-out Spiritualist it is that sort of intolerance. It is very common, though it is generally cast rather in the tone of the quiet sneer than of the noisy roar. I like the latter best. By the way, Malone, if you care to go deeper into this subject I may be able to help you. You've heard of Linden?"

"Linden, the professional medium? Yes, I've been told he is the greatest blackguard unhung."

"Ah, well, they usually talk of them like that. You must judge for yourself. He put his knee-cap out last winter and I put it in again, and that has made a friendly bond between us. It's not always easy to get him, and of course a small fee, a guinea, I think, is usual, but if you wanted a sitting I could work it."

"You think him genuine?"

Atkinson shrugged his shoulders.

"I dare say they all take the line of least resistance. I can only say that I have never detected him in fraud. You must judge for yourself."

"I will," said Malone. "I am getting hot on this trail. And there is copy in it, too. When things are more easy I'll write to you, Atkinson, and we can go more deeply into the matter."

(To be continued.)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 144.

A STRENUOUS game the lover oft has played;
My garden is adorned by pretty maid.

1. Mix up the needed type; can Fate assign
To mortals health dependent on one line?

2. To fisher here give proper name alone,
Though joined to prefix it is always shown.

3. This tells of prelate, hinting Jonathan,
And in abbreviation shows the man.

4. Father of twenty children used to tell
Of four-leaved clover, and of this as well.

5. Suggesting revelry in bygone days,
In present times it tells of formal praise.

6. Whole, lacking interjection, would you view?
Put this in land where whole is now taboo.

7. A letter leaves each end. The rest behold
Of place that lovely widow saved of old.

8. What scientific cranks long sought in vain,
A monarch won, and with it endless pain.

9. Coal-tinted ever, modern rook is missed
In treatises of ornithologist.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 144 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on July 10th.

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 143.

(The Third of the Series.)

CAST out by father's wrath, a youthful knight
Went with his king the infidels to fight;
A prize he won, great skill with courage blended,
And, wounded sore, by Jewish maid was tended.

1. In veins of the immortal gods it ran.
2. Where every prospect pleases, what is man?

3. At Ramoth-Gilead he met his doom.
4. Warriors at Ivry rallied round his plume.

5. A war-time play; and war-dogs know its sound.
6. This "water-fly" in Denmark once was found.

7. Carried by snow-white beast across the wave,
Name to a continent 'tis said she gave.

JASON.

1. I	c h o	R
2. V	i l	E
3. A	h a	B
4. N	a v a r r	E
5. H	a v o	C
6. O	s r i	C
7. E	u r o p	A

NOTES.—Light 2. Heber's hymn. 4. Macaulay, Ivry. 5 and 6. Shakespeare.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

"Out, Pounce, Piggy!"

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

ILLUSTRATED BY W. SMITHSON BROADHEAD

I.

CRUMTOCHTY, as everybody knows, is one of the great sporting domains of the Highlands of Scotland. Salmon-fishing, grouse-shooting, and stalking are of the best. The castle is immense, standing in a fine park, surrounded by gardens expensive to keep up. Everybody also knows (and regrets) that the owner, McCullough of McCullough, has never been able to live at Crumtochty since his father's death. The place has been let year after year to very rich men. Last year it was taken by Mr. Joseph P. Munro, of Pasadena, California, one of the cinema magnates. The McCullough expressed surprise when he learned from his agents the nationality of his tenant.

"Is Mr. Munro a sportsman?" he asked.

A representative of a famous firm replied evasively:—

"He's a sport; and he has paid, partly in advance, a higher rent than we have ever got before."

This was heartening news to an impoverished chieftain, who there and then dismissed Mr. Munro from his thoughts, till he received a letter from that gentleman, regarded (and rightly) by the McCullough as an S.O.S. signal. Part of this remarkable epistle ran as follows:—

> "I know nothing about these butt shoots, and my friends know the same. It would be neighbourly on your part, sir, to put me wise. And I ask you, as a personal favour, to be my guest, for as long as you take a notion to stick it. It may interest you to know that Miss Daffodil Angell joins our circle, a bunch of live wires, on the 11th of August. . . ."

The McCullough had never heard of Miss Daffodil Angell! This simply howls for explanation, inasmuch as Miss Angell is almost as well known in America as Miss Pickford. The McCullough, however, was not a patron of the "pictures" nor a reader of newspapers. He was fully occupied, indeed, as his own factor, although he left his sporting rights in the hands of the London firm just mentioned. Within twenty-four hours of reading Mr. Munro's letter, the McCullough had been assured that Daffy Angell was a beauty, a film star of the first magnitude, and that this was her first visit to Europe.

The McCullough, partly out of curiosity, partly out of philanthropy, accepted Mr. Munro's cordial invitation; and wrote so pleasantly and unaffectedly to the great man that Mr. Munro wrote another letter, on arrival from New York, saying that he hoped to be at the castle on the first of August to make necessary preparations for his guests. Would the McCullough come around, if not too inconvenient, and make acquaintance?

The McCullough, who lived quietly in a small lodge upon the fringe of his vast property, drove over in his Ford car upon the afternoon of the second of August. Mr. Munro was delighted to see him, although mentally and physically much upset. He aired his grievance in the gun-room.

"Look at that, sir."

The McCullough looked at a glazed cabinet with bitter-sweet emotions. The cabinet, in the good old pre-war days, had held his guns and rifles, and those belonging to his father's guests. It was now empty.

"No shot-guns," sputtered Mr. Munro. "I ask you, where are our gas-pipes?"

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For a moment the chieftain was puzzled. But he was fairly quick at the uptake, replying after a pause :—

"Tenants bring their own guns."

"I've paid a walloping rent," said Mr. Munro. "You don't spring it on me that a furnished house is let to a stranger with the most important fixin's taken out of it? A bit thick, I must say. Never owned a shot-gun in my life. My bunch don't carry shot-guns. What in blazes are we to do?"

The McCullough murmured thoughtfully :—

"You can buy guns or hire them. How many are in your—bunch?"

"Call it a round dozen. Your head keeper says we must have two guns apiece. Now—what about it?"

"So far as you are concerned, Mr. Munro, I think you had better be measured for a pair of guns without loss of time. There isn't much time. I dare say I can find you a rifle. Your guests, believe me, should be told by you to bring their own guns, fishing gear, rifles, ammunition, and—er—all that."

Mr. Munro snorted.

"Not on your life. When I ask my friends to have a hog-killing time with me, I foot all bills. Do they bring their own booze?"

The young man laughed. He liked Mr. Munro at sight. He had never met a man like him. Mr. Munro carried on volubly, using his own vernacular :—

"This place is great—just right. And something ventilating and breezy to me. Golly! I mean to make things hum up here. And, don't you forget it, the victualling department is my hobby. We're out for blood, me and my friends. Say—you 'phone your sporting goods feller. Tell him I've spilled the beans. Nice sort of package to hand the boys, that empty cupboard! Yes, sir, I want two dozen gas-pipes and all the fittings, fishing-poles, rifles, and ammunition."

The McCullough's good Scots blood was chilled with apprehension.

"B-b-but," he stammered, "h-have you the r-remotest idea what the bill will be?"

"I must wiggle out of this mess. Get the best, and then you have it. There's Daff. Some girl! Daff is going to catch a salmon, shoot a cockerel, and grass a big stag. You pay particular attention to Daff. A darling from Darlingville."

The McCullough smiled.

"Miss Angell has handled a gun and a rod?"

"Not she. She *has* to do it. It's in the contract."

This was Choctaw to the McCullough. He supposed that a genial host had suggested to a novice new excitements. At the moment he was wondering feverishly whether it would be possible to cancel his engagement for the Twelfth. Grouse-shooting, even over his own magnificent moors, with a "bunch" of novices, male and female, put the wind up a gallant gentleman and ex-officer.

"I thought, maybe," continued Mr. Munro genially, "that you wouldn't mind having Daff in your butt. And here and now I want to thank you for joining my crowd. Mrs. Munro told me I'd bitten off more than I could chew, but with you on hand I'm not worrying a little bit."

The McCullough blushed.

"I—I will do my best, Mr. Munro."

"We'll crack a small bot. on that, here and now."

Protest was futile. A pint of the best pop had tonic effect. Two supermen got to work. The McCullough was a superman at all details connected with Highland sport. Mr. Munro, in his line of business, held the cinema world record as a hustler. By the eve of the Twelfth everything necessary had been provided. On the eve, the "bunch," as Mr. Munro put it, materialized, before dinner, in the long saloon.

II.

PROBABLY Mr. Munro's guests were as impressed with the McCullough, in a chieftain's full kit, as he was by them. But each live wire in turn asked innumerable questions. The McCullough had no time to ask questions. He was meeting for the first time men and women from an unknown world. It was difficult to understand English as spoken by them. He ought, perhaps, to have guessed they were all "picture artistes," but he didn't. Business lay behind their activities. How could he divine that?

Miss Daffodil smiled upon all, knowing that her smile was her greatest asset, but she beamed upon the McCullough as he bowed before her, and assured him, in a voice soft as satin, that he was the "kiltiest" boy she had ever met, even in her dreams.

"Nothing Ritzy about you," she declared.

"Ritzy——?"

"I mean nothing chesty. When Mr. Munro told me I was up against the big chief of a big tribe——"

"Clan."

"Yes. I love the way you talk, and your English accent. But I sure got the willies at thought of meeting you. And some ways it never got across that you were so young."

"Not very young, Miss Angell."

"Now I got you easy. We're going to be friends. Tell me all you know about the castle."

" It will take time," said a cautious Scot.

He could recall his father's guests, who had sat round the great dinner-table, and the guests of his former tenants. But he had to admit that Mr. Munro's bunch were entertaining and, in their peculiar way, the right sort. Glancing up at the family portraits, he seemed to detect reassuring smiles upon their faces. The McCullough who was out with Prince Charlie in '45 challenged attention.

" Looks a crackerjack," said Miss Angell.

" I am wearing his sporran," murmured her new friend.

He had to explain what a sporran was.

He learned that Angell was the young lady's stage name. Mr. Munro had told the big chief of a big tribe what this little girl earned—a staggering salary even when computed in pounds sterling. Mr. Munro added, curtly: " Makes it and saves it."

In the bunch—and the pick of it physically—was Boy Sparling. The McCullough had never heard of HIM till full, too full, information flowed from Mr. Munro's lips. Boy, according to Mr. Munro, was the rival of Mr. Douglas Fairbanks in the cinema world. He had been featured everywhere with Miss Angell. Still, Mr. Munro had to admit that the amazing pair were not quite the household words that deservedly they ought to be in the United Kingdom. " You Britishers," added Mr. Munro, " don't shake on to the goods as quick as we do."

Before dinner Mrs. Munro and Miss Munro were presented to the chieftain. The McCullough was slightly embarrassed at this reversal of ordinary etiquette. Evidently his host regarded him as royalty. And nearly everybody, understanding somehow that the young man was not to be addressed

as Mister McCullough, called him, deferentially, "sir." Mrs. Munro, indeed, had asked whether she ought to kiss his hand, and Mr. Munro had replied, with humour: "Not unless you want to."

The McCullough decided that Mirabel Munro and he were the only ordinary persons amongst a brilliant company. Mirabel had never been featured; she spoke English that the McCullough could understand without mental strain; she appeared to be what she was—a quiet body wearing from choice inconspicuous clothes. Her father's blue eyes twinkled in a demure face.

After dinner everybody fox-trotted in the great hall, till the McCullough's piper came in. After that, reels, foursome and eightsome, were in order. Probably the piper and his chief had never tried to instruct keener or more clever pupils. Mr. Munro declared his intention of buying a kilt. The piper commended this, saying that a reel could not be

She beamed upon the McCullough and assured him that he was the "kiltiest" boy she had ever met, even in her dreams.

danced properly in pantaloons. Daffodil, equal to any occasion, at once addressed her host as The Munro."

III.

WHEN the ladies went to bed, the men, led by their host, proceeded to the gun-room, often used in Victorian days as a smoking-room. Trophies of the chase hung upon the walls, each dated. Upon a long table were brand-new gun-cases, fishing rods, reels, and everything else thoughtfully supplied by the "sporting goods feller." To the McCullough's relief, he discovered that three at least of Mr. Munro's guests had shot duck and quail in California.

"Can I handle a gun?" asked Boy Sparling. "Lemme show you."

He seized a rifle, spun it cleverly till the barrel was whizzing within an inch of the McCullough's nose, hurled it up to the ceiling, and caught it (by the trigger) as it descended.

"If it had been loaded!" gasped the chief.

"I've never shot with two guns," said Boy, "but I'll do it, sir, to-morrow."

"You bet," added Mr. Munro.

The McCullough drank his toddy. Mr. Munro hoped that nobody would get "hopped."

"We have to hit the incomers," he observed, solemnly.

As a precaution, the McCullough had seen to it that stout stakes were fixed at the corners of each butt, making it impossible for a novice to fire down the line. He had no idea what would happen on the morrow, but hoped for the best. His own gillies, functioning as loaders, received careful instructions.

Of course, the shoot was a roaring farce. The ladies who came out saw one of the finest shots in Scotland at work. With undisguised contempt they watched the others at play.

Perhaps Mr. Munro conveyed pithily the conviction that imposed itself upon his bunch :—

Miss Angell was "snapped" holding an

"I can't see the derned cockerels against the spinach."

"And you won't see them," said Daffodil, "not in a month of Sundays. Cross-word puzzles for you after this."

The McCullough, wise and kind man, poured balm upon lacerated tissues.

"To-morrow," he said, "we'll have a go at clay pigeons. I have two traps on the castle walls. Shooting driven grouse is entirely a matter of practice."

Next day the bunch practised at clay

pigeons, played golf and tennis, and looked at the river, which happened to be in spate and the colour of chocolate. Mr. Munro eyed the famous Crum malevolently.

"Daff *must* fish to-morrow," he told the McCullough.

"Salmon, my dear sir, can't take a fly unless they see it."

entrancingly curved rod at the right angle.

"But—it's fixed. And I'm counting on you."

"On me? Whatever for?"

Mr. Munro took his arm and pressed it affectionately.

"I feel as if me and you were way back friends. You ain't quite caught on, eh? You ain't buckled down to the stunt?"

"No, not yet."

"Publicity. I had a hunch, see, that Daff and Boy must get a boost over here as sports. It's costing me big money. To-morrow the *Prattler* man answers the bell. It's up to him to snap Daff salmon fishing."

The McCullough smiled.

"I'll attend to that. Yes, I understand. You want me to vet these sporting stunts."

Mr. Munro nodded. It occurred to him that the chief was "falling for it," because he had been captivated by the beautiful Daffodil, modestly unaware that he, a stout, middle-aged man of business, had inspired honest regard in a descendant of Scottish kings. It is true that Munro's ways were not McCullough's ways, but they were soaped with the milk of human kindness. The McCullough had said to himself, "I'm in this, and I must see it through."

Accordingly Miss Angell was "snapped" when well "into" a fish, holding an entrancingly curved rod at the right angle. The McCullough had previously hooked a small log; and the River Crum did the rest. Later on—so it was arranged—the *Prattler* man would snap "the Angell girl" at work in the butts; and later on again stalking the tall red deer. Within a week readers of the *Prattler* not only beheld Miss Daff playing a noble salmon in a famous pool, but saw the fish (taken from the larder for no other purpose) at the end of a gaff wielded by the owner of Crumtochty Castle.

Mr. Munro said:—

"That fish is no sardine."

IV.

PLEASANT days flitted by, although Boy found another adjective for them.

Somehow, for the first time in many years, HE was out of the pictures. The

McCullough had become Daffy's leading man. He led the young lady everywhere. The bunch chaffed Boy, who scowled upon them when they said, "This is a cinch, baby. You go get into petticoats—quick."

Under pressure from Mr. Munro, Boy did appear in a kilt, and was told brutally by Daffy to apply grease-paint to knees too white. What an insult to the cowboy of the Western World!

Each evening Miss Angell wore her scintillating chain of diamonds. Other women might wear ropes of pearls, too easily imitated nowadays. Sham diamonds are not worn. These diamonds represented what Daffy had earned as the "Angel Child"—a magnificent "ad." The necklace went round her lovely neck and reached to her waist. She wore no other jewellery.

On the fourth night the McCullough suggested, "Out, pounce, Piggy!" as a game that could be played to perfection in his ancient castle. Knowing every nook and corner, he volunteered to be "Piggy." The game is played in the dark under strict rules. Everybody, including Piggy, hides himself or herself. At a signal each must return, as silently as possible, to a given place, regarded as sanctuary. Piggy alone can pounce. He pounces and takes prisoner a gasping victim pledged to remain in durance dark till rescued by some bold adventurer who has gained safe harbourage. Screams, struggles, applause are part of this exciting game, which may last for nearly an hour if played with real skill and resource. Piggy, if he knows his ground, generally wins. He can lurk near the sanctuary, and pounce at the last moment; he can lay traps—chairs, footstools, and so forth—to trip up the unwary.

Daffy entered into this game, new to her, with spirit and enthusiasm, the greater, perhaps, because the McCullough had laid her odds, three to one in modest half-crowns, that he would capture her. And he did. Several essayed her rescue and were captured in their turn. Finally, Boy achieved the feat amid loud and prolonged applause. Soon afterwards the game came to an end and the full lights were turned on. Five minutes afterwards Mrs. Munro exclaimed, shrilly:—

"Child—where is your necklace?"

Daffy put her hand to her neck and found nothing there but soft flesh.

"I—I had it on," she gasped.

There was no doubt of this. The McCullough said quietly:—

"A link must have snapped in one of the scrimmages. We shall soon find it."

But they didn't find it. After exhaustive search, Mr. Munro's guests found themselves in the saloon, silent and dismayed. Mr. Munro hurried out, and came back flushed of countenance.

"It's past twelve," he growled. "All the servants have gone to bed. Say—hasn't this joke gone far enough?"

Nobody answered him. Mr. Munro spoke more sharply:—

"I'm going to lock the doors." He did so. "And in two jiffs I shall switch off the lights. We'll pretend we're playing 'Out, pounce, Piggy!' but there'll be no pouncing. When the lights are switched on again, we'll see, I hope, Daff's diamonds in a chair or on the table or on the carpet. And then we'll—we'll let it go at that."

A second later they were in Cimmerian darkness.

"Get a move on," admonished Mr. Munro. "Give the ballyhooing idiot who's played this silly joke a chance."

Faint rustlings became audible; here and there a couple collided. But Daffy stood still. She said afterwards that the McCullough was standing close to her all the time. When the lights were turned on, no necklace greeted Mr. Munro's eager eyes. He exclaimed, huskily:—

"Hell!"

Daffy sank into a chair. Mr. Munro approached the McCullough.

"Ain't you a J.P. in these parts? What ought I to do?"

A young man answered, hesitatingly:—

"Really, I—I don't know."

"You're the big noise; you own this castle. If we were your guests what would you do?"

"I—I suppose I should sleep over it, and perhaps send for a private detective."

"Who'd link up too late."

Boy said in a defiant tone:—

"We ought to be searched, all of us. I'm ready."

He slapped his slender figure significantly.

"Oh, shut up!" said Mr. Munro. "This ain't a search party; and I don't entertain thieves. We were all over the place. I guess Daff's necklace will be found by one of the housemaids bright and early—tomorrow."

But it wasn't.

V.

THE hullabaloo that followed furnished "copy" to every newspaper in England and America. Crumtochty Castle was besieged by reporters and photographers. Mr. Munro refused to call in the police. And then a terrible thing happened. Suspicion spread tentacles about the McCullough and gripped him mercilessly. He—and nobody else—had captured Daffodil in the dark; the girl had struggled hard to

escape. During that struggle the necklace must have been snipped from her neck. To a man who knew every inch of the ancient castle it would be easy to hide it. When Boy Sparling rescued the lovely captive, there had been no struggle. He had just touched her, so she testified, and then, holding his coat tails, she had followed him on tip-toe back to the sanctuary.

Publicity, it will be recalled, threw a searchlight upon the McCullough's financial affairs. He had inherited a great property heavily mortgaged. Income-tax and super-tax had assailed him cruelly. Finally, some paper in America hinted that he was the thief; and the obscure paragraph was copied, with scathing comments, by the English Press. Scotland, of course, took up the cudgels in defence of a favourite son. And this made matters rather worse.

Meanwhile, the "bunch" remained at Crumtochty, and the McCullough, yielding to the impassioned appeals of Mr. Munro, stayed on too. But he said quietly to his host:—

"Miss Angell and Boy Sparling think I took it."

"Great Judas! Then I'll out 'em both, even if it breaks the contract. Anyways, they've got publicity out of this. But, golly! does she dare to put this across you?"

"She has changed in her manner; she avoids me. I—well, I know."

"I'm beginning to think that baby is half vamp and half floosie."

Mr. Munro had to explain that a "vamp" was an abbreviation for the blood-sucking vampire bat, who bleeds his victims white without giving anything in return. A "floosie" was a baby face with appealing eyes, very helpful to herself by reason of her helplessness, and, like the vamp, ready to accept everything for nothing. He added generously:—

"I guess I've made a million out of Daff, and more dollars in sight. But, gee! if she is downing you, she offs it. You get me?"

The McCullough said courteously that under the circumstances he, not Daff, should leave the castle. Mr. Munro, much heated, held his guest to his engagement. The "bunch" acclaimed his decision. Some of them, under the McCullough's tutelage, were grassing the incoming cockerels. When the river was in order again, Mr. Munro landed a nice clean fish. Boy Sparling was photographed after shooting his first stag.

But the loss of the diamond necklace had wrecked the party. Mirabel, with all her father's directness of speech, suggested a plausible hypothesis to Mrs. Munro, who duly passed it on to her masterful lord.

"Daffy," said Mirabel, "is fed up with adulation. The chief didn't adulate. He just can't. That maddened Daffy. She went for him. And that maddened Boy. Boy is back of this."

"That does wind it up," sighed Mrs. Munro.

"And that game, such fun, we haven't played it since."

Mr. Munro, when this was repeated to him, said incisively:—

"If Mirabel wants to play the derned game again, she shall."

Mrs. Munro said, deprecatingly:—

"You know, dearie, I've a notion that Mirabel felt sore because Boy didn't rescue her. If I was you, I'd pay no attention to what she says."

"Ho!" ejaculated Mr. Munro. "Ho—ho!" he repeated, angrily. "Are you hinting that my little girl is soft on that guy?"

"It's your fault if she is. You asked him here. I know what you're going to say—*business*. And your business has made you rich. You take care that it doesn't make you poor."

Mr. Munro gasped. Boy Sparling had two wives alive. They had divorced him.

"Hasn't he opened your eyes?"

"He?"

"You know who I mean, Joe. You've been trotting in the right class, with a thoroughbred. And it ought to give you, as it does me, the minnies when you look at him and then look at Boy."

"Why, mother, I think I'll shake you a cocktail."

"No. It's just this, dearie. You haven't sensed the situation. You've always told me you wanted the best, and meant to have it. Now you're mixing the worst with the best."

"I am a mixer," admitted Mr. Munro, "and I thought myself a good mixer. This is one on the solar plexus for me."

To cool his brain, he walked down to the river with the McCullough.

VI.

THAT night after dinner Mr. Munro commanded a game of "Out, pounce, Piggy!" But Boy Sparling insisted on playing Piggy. Mrs. Munro, wearing her rope of pearls, took part in the game. The McCullough, as usual, wore the kilts. A lively member of the "bunch" had the bad taste (so Mrs. Munro was of opinion) to comment on this.

"If you lose your pearls——"

"If I do," replied his hostess, "I shall

get me another string, because these are fully insured against all loss."

Daffy observed with some sprightliness:—

"One up on me. My diamonds weren't insured."

The game began and went on with varying fortunes. Mrs. Munro was taken prisoner by the alert Boy, and so was the McCullough. When the lights were turned up and truce called, Mirabel and the chieftain were missing. Mirabel, it appeared, had stolen off to rescue the prisoner. Hardly had this challenged comment, when Mr. Munro beheld his wife without her pearls.

At this moment the McCullough and Mirabel appeared. Mr. Munro pointed a trembling finger at Boy Sparling. "He knows where the pearls are."

"Mother—your pearls!"

They had vanished.

Then Boy Sparling dropped a brick upon the toes of everybody present.

"I know where they are," he declared.

At this moment the McCullough and Mirabel appeared.

Mr. Munro, in excited tones, apprised the absentees of the facts, pointing a trembling finger at Boy Sparling.

" He knows where they are."

" Tell us," shouted the others.

" Mrs. Munro's pearls are in the chief's sporran."

" Are they really ? " murmured the coolest person present. " I never bet on certainties, or I would lay as much as a thousand to three that they are not."

He opened the ancient sporran, which had been "out" in the '45, and invited Mr. Munro to explore its recesses.

" Not a derned thing. Maybe," added Mr. Munro, scathingly, turning to the disconcerted Boy, " you expected to find Daff's diamonds there, too ? "

" To be honest, I did."

The McCullough, so to speak, took the stage.

" The pearls and the diamonds are in my pocket," he said, quietly. " I put them there."

Nobody spoke as the McCullough, with a courtly bow, returned the pearls to Mrs. Munro and the diamonds to Miss Angell. Mr. Munro, wiping his forehead with an immense bandanna, said, feebly :—

" You have me sure—cooked to a crisp. What in hell does it mean ? "

" In one word, Mr. Munro, your own—*Publicity*."

Then the McCullough made the longest and most effective speech of his life :—

"I can guess now, and so can you, who took the diamonds. Mr. Sparling. Before we began playing the brilliant amateur thief must have noticed that I removed my sporran, simply because it is a valuable heirloom. I put it on again when the lights were turned up. I lock it up when I go to bed. I have never carried anything in it, not even a pocket-handkerchief. Had we been searched, as Mr. Sparling suggested, the necklace would have been found in my possession, and Mr. Sparling would have enjoyed the first and last laugh against me. The laugh would have been against him, the joke would have fallen flat, if his plans had miscarried. We know what happened after that. I believed that Miss Daffodil, for publicity purposes, had stolen her own necklace."

"I hadn't," exclaimed Daffodil.

"No. I never found the necklace till to-night. Once again I had put the sporran where I placed it before. But it was not quite in the same place, which aroused mild suspicions. In it I found the diamonds and Mrs. Munro's pearls, which I transferred to my coat pocket. Miss Munro saw me find the precious objects."

"I did," said Mirabel.

"And why," asked Daffodil, turning a furious face to Boy Sparling, "did you play the screaming dumb-bell, when you saw how miserable I was ?"

"Publicity," said Mr. Sparling, coolly.

Everybody—except the McCullough and Mirabel—chattered like jays disturbed by a fox. But in the end harmony was restored ; and the McCullough was invited to mix a whisky punch, which he did smilingly. Boy Sparling appeared to be rather proud of his achievements.

"I was getting peeved," he admitted. "Daff was in the limelight and I was in the soup. Daff was annexing more'n her share of Printer's Pie. My little stunt gingered things up for the big event."

"What big event ?" asked the McCullough.

Everybody stared at him. Then Daff laughed, jumped up, threw her lovely arms round the chieftain's neck, and kissed him.

"Isn't he a lamb ?" she asked. "He doesn't yet know, and he won't understand, that Mr. Munro took this old castle and asked us all here for no other purpose except to advertise the super-film entitled "The Pickpocket and the Princess," to be released five weeks hence in London."

"I didn't know that," said the McCullough, quietly.

Mr. Munro looked rather ashamed of himself.

"Maybe," he said, hesitatingly, "I ought to have told your agents that. Maybe," he continued, with sincere anxiety, "you think that this has been a skin game, and that you've been skinned ?"

The McCullough reassured him.

"Mr. Munro, I give you my word that I feel nothing of the sort. You have entertained me delightfully."

"Golly! You're a mixer."

"I hope you will repeat that after you've tasted this toddy."

AN hour later—when the McCullough was removing his sporran (and eyeing it whimsically)—Mr. Munro tapped at the door and came in.

"Honest, now ? Ain't you real mad with me ?"

"With you, Mr. Munro ?"

"Yes, sir. I'm feeling mighty mean. I guess your complex and what Boy calls his complex ain't two of a kind. And when I think that through me you, a descendant of Scotch kings, have been called a thief, why—I want to hunt a kicking machine."

"But I am a thief."

"W-w-w-what—— ?"

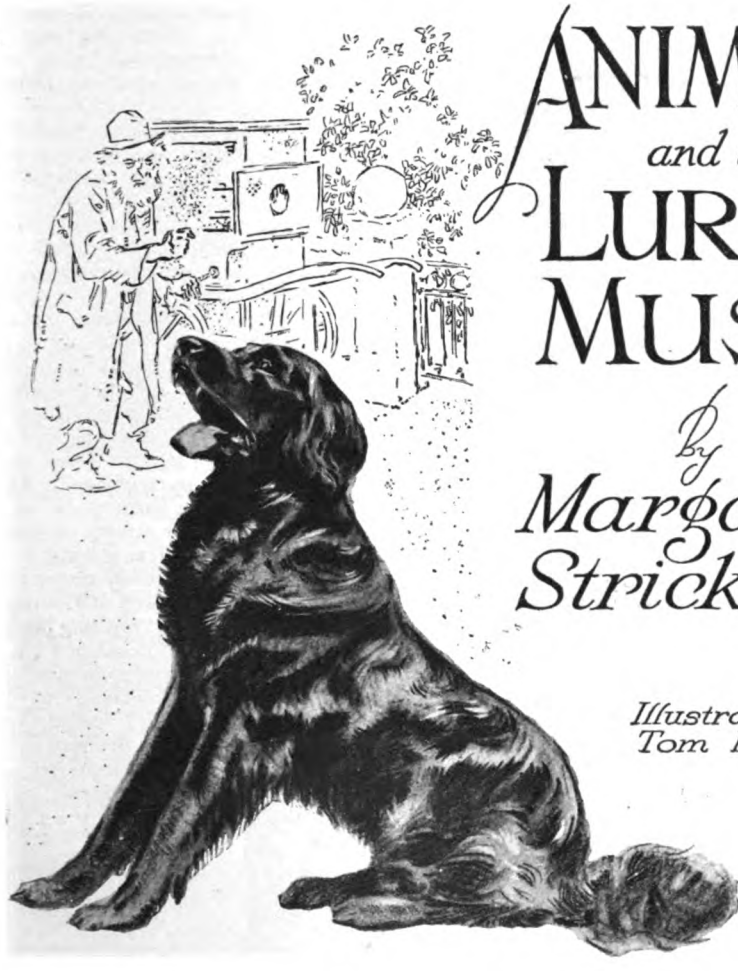
"Yes, to-night, just after your girl rescued me, which she did most cleverly, I stole something infinitely more precious than pearls or diamonds."

"Suffering snakes—— !"

"No. Mirabel's heart."

"Why, we all thought that Daff——"

"I know. But, you see, all my traffics and excursions with Daff were just—Publicity."



ANIMALS and the LURE of MUSIC

By Margaret Strickland

Illustrated by Tom Peddie

EVERYONE knows that the human mind can be saddened or gladdened, soothed or excited, by music, but comparatively few realize the extent to which animals are likewise affected; and not only animals, but birds, reptiles, and even insects. I am of the opinion that all creatures are attracted, more or less, by some form of music, either vocal or instrumental, and my personal observations have been sufficiently interesting to make me wish that I might have a Zoological Garden to myself, in which to experiment.

With regard to the ordinary domestic animals, undoubtedly the majority are fond of music. Horses, once they have become accustomed to it, delight to march to the strains of a military band, though any harsh or sudden sound, such as the beating of drums or violent trumpeting, they hate. To give an instance of how a horse can be affected by music, take the case of Double Chance, who won the Grand National this year. He was down to run on March 12th at Cheltenham, and was confidently expected to win. However, on the morning of the race he was found in such a highly nervous condition that the trainer, Fred Archer, decided it was unwise to run him. It appeared that someone had been singing and playing a banjo outside the horse's box on the eve of the race, and to this was attributed the animal's indisposition. I have it from Mr. Archer himself that the horse was "sweating and trembling from head to foot." Horses, especially thoroughbreds, are so sensitive and highly strung that any strong emotion, whether of pleasure or distress, can easily upset their whole calibre; consequently their owners would be well advised to see that there are no strolling musicians in the close vicinity of their stables.

It is no uncommon sight to see a dog

"The most truly musical dog we ever had was a collie named Bruce."

sitting by a piano, street organ, or band, with its head thrown back, howling dismally. Most people think this is because they dislike it, but in the greater number of cases this is the dog's way of showing appreciation. If it offended their ears they would surely run away instead of planting themselves as near to the sound as possible. True, there are certain cadences that jar their nerves. In this respect animals show themselves considerably superior to many human beings, for they invariably prefer melodious sounds, anything of a blatant and cacophonous nature often exciting them to anger.

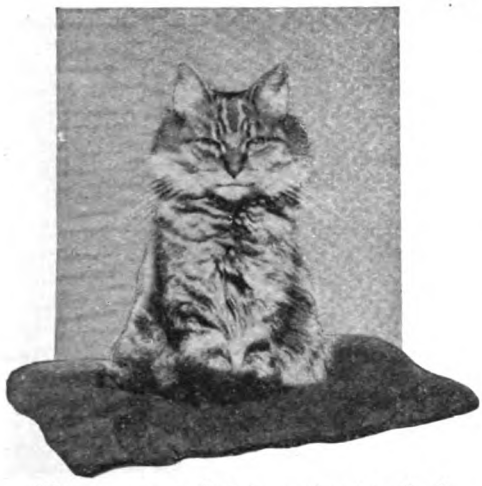
We have had several musical dogs in our family. One terrier was a tremendous annoyance to my music-master, for he would insist on lying under the piano and alternately whining and howling an accompaniment to my scales and studies. It was significant, however, that chromatics and arpeggios chiefly provoked the howls, which goes to prove my theory that low notes aggravate, and very high notes excite, animals. When more tuneful melodies were played he expressed his feelings in shivering little sobs and sighs, interspersed with gentle moans.

A Pekingese, owned by some musical friends of mine, used always to lie under the piano, watching the players with pathetic, bulging eyes, from which tears always streamed during certain passages of the music. But this was an exceptionally "temperamental" dog, who wept like a child whenever its sensibilities were hurt in any way.

A retriever my father had when we were very young had rather an inferior taste in music. He would follow an organ-grinder all round the village, always sitting near him during the "turns" and loudly lifting up his voice. The infuriated man tried every means of driving it away, but to no purpose. The dog resolutely attached itself to that organ, and, having become desperately jealous of a baby that had lately arrived at home, he at last took himself off altogether and became the organ-grinder's dog.

The most truly musical dog we ever had was a collie named Bruce. He never howled, but from any part of the house—from the far ends of the garden—he would come hurrying at the first strains of music. Sometimes he would suffer grievous disappointments. It would merely prove to be someone dusting the keyboard of the piano, and he would arrive to find "nothing doing." On more than one of these occasions I have been so touched by his reproachful look that I have stayed and played to him when I could, perhaps, ill spare the time. He cared only for good music. This, however, was but

"This Pom. will hear a score of gramophone records without making the slightest sound, but the moment Caruso's voice soars forth he is quivering with excitement."



Chiggy—a cat that is passionately fond of music.

natural, I suppose, since he had for so many years been accustomed to it. As a rule he would lie with his nose on his fore paws, watching and listening intently; but certain things roused him to active enthusiasm, which he would show by coming and sitting on his haunches close beside me. Wagner had a very stirring effect on him, particularly the Prelude to the Third Act of "Lohengrin" and the Venusberg music from "Tannhäuser." He would stand up on his hind legs, pawing at the arms of the player, sometimes uttering sharp barks. I think, undoubtedly, he found this music too stimulating.

A friend of mine has a number of Pomeranian dogs, who all listen to the gramophone with evident pleasure. One, however, has an exceptionally musical ear and gives a most remarkable performance in proof of this. He will hear a score of different records without making the slightest sound, but the moment Caruso's voice soars forth he is over to the instrument, quivering with excitement. It seems almost as though he is trying to imitate the singer, for his plaintive little notes swell with the crescendoes and diminish with the diminuendoes, while his whole being vibrates with ecstasy. That wonderful quality in the great tenor's voice which has thrilled millions likewise thrills this small dog, as no other singer—and he has heard many—has the power to do.

Cats are equally fond of music, and show a distinct partiality for certain voices. Among several singers who used to visit us was a Welshman with a very pleasing, but quite untrained, tenor voice. As soon as he began to sing, an old black cat we had would climb on to his shoulders and, with loud purrs, rub against his head while he sang, evincing wild enthusiasm on the high notes and trying to look down the man's throat to see where the wonderful sound came from. Needless to say, singing under these conditions was extremely difficult, as everyone present was usually convulsed with laughter. To all other voices this cat listened quite unmoved, and a baritone, who was considered quite a finished singer, was distinctly piqued because his performances brought forth no applause whatever.

My cat Chiggy is passionately fond of both instrumental and vocal music. I often play and sing to her, and she lies in my lap, tramping and purring with delight.

"When I play she sits with her two paws on my left wrist, looking up into my face with a rapt, adoring smile."

When I stop she will beg up, pat my face, and "butt heads," which I know means "Encore!" Then I go on, and she either curls round again or sits with her two paws on my left wrist, heedless of the jerking which she necessarily receives as my hands move, and looking up into my face with a rapt,

adoring smile. She, like the black cat, shows marked preference for a tenor voice. A friend, whose accompaniments I frequently play, has had to sing with her curled round his neck; but usually she leaps excitedly backwards and forwards from his shoulders to mine, or sits on the top of the piano, as near to him as possible, her eyes intent upon his lips.

Somewhat similar, apparently, was the behaviour of Madame Théophile, one of the favourite pets of that ardent cat-lover, Théophile Gautier. She used to sit on a pile of music and listen to singers with visible signs of enjoyment. "Piercing notes, however, always made her nervous," says Gautier, "and at the high A she never failed to close the singer's mouth with her soft paw."

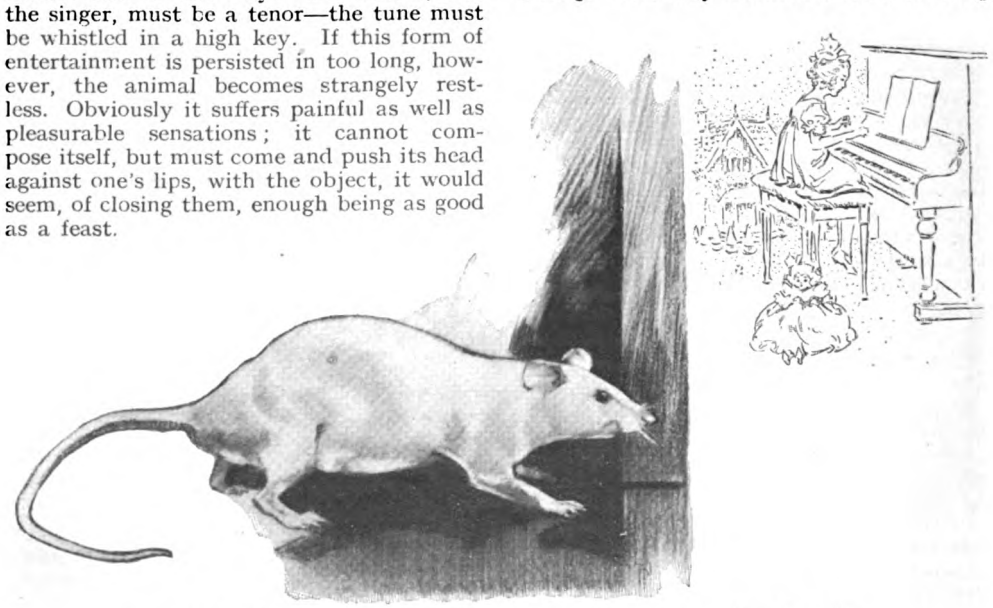
Some years ago an inhabitant of one of the Western United States, who was a firm believer in the cat's love of music, left all his property for the establishment of a feline infirmary. And in his will he provided that "an accordion be played in the auditorium by one of the regular nurses, to be selected for that purpose exclusively, the playing to be kept up continuously, that the cats may have the privilege of always hearing and enjoying that instrument which is the nearest approach to the human voice."

Whistling has a peculiar effect upon some cats, and will arouse them from the soundest slumbers and bring them to one's very mouth. But it is not everyone who can attract cats in this way. The siffleur, like the singer, must be a tenor—the tune must be whistled in a high key. If this form of entertainment is persisted in too long, however, the animal becomes strangely restless. Obviously it suffers painful as well as pleasurable sensations; it cannot compose itself, but must come and push its head against one's lips, with the object, it would seem, of closing them, enough being as good as a feast.

Lizards are also susceptible to whistling, and by this means are charmed and enticed into traps. Snakes, everyone knows, are caught and tamed by music, the soft, monotonous plaint of a pipe being irresistible to them. Even the most dangerous "rattlers," it is said, can be completely subdued and soothed by the tones of a flute.

Amongst the various pets we had when I was a child was a white rat named Mike, a great favourite. Although his abode, quite an elaborate erection, was in the nursery, he was free to roam about the house wherever he pleased, like the cat and dog, with whom he was on the best of terms. It was a pretty sight to see the trio lying together on the hearthrug, the rat usually cuddled in between his two bigger companions. Of the three, Mike was decidedly the most musical. He would go daily on foraging expeditions to the kitchen regions, but at the first sound of the piano he would come scuttling back as fast as he could; sometimes it would be to the drawing-room, but most frequently upstairs to the nursery, where our practising was done. And there he would sit beside the piano, motionless, listening as though mesmerized. Indeed, I believe these rodents are fascinated by music even as are snakes.

To give another instance: in July of 1921 I was staying at a country hotel, and one hot afternoon had taken my chair to a secluded part of the grounds and placed it, for the shade, close to a tall evergreen shrub. While sitting there I began to hum a song. Presently I heard a faint rustling,



"At the first sound of the piano he would come scuttling back."

which drew ever nearer and nearer. Rustle, rustle, on it came, until I heard it in the shrub at my side. Suddenly, out of the thick foliage, I perceived two bright, beady eyes looking at me. Still singing, I bent gradually forward, while my visitor, a large field-mouse, crept slowly along a branch towards me, till its nose was within a foot of mine. And so we remained for, possibly, twenty minutes, the mouse never moving, absolutely fascinated by the sound. At last, growing weary of my strained position, I stopped singing and drew back. Immediately the little creature scampered away and I stood up and watched—or rather hearkened to—its journeying home. It had come quite a distance, through a thick hedge which divided the hotel garden from an adjoining field. Several times after this I went to the same spot and repeated my performance, and on each occasion the mouse appeared and acted in precisely the same manner.

"Whenever there was music going on, the toad would come crawling in to listen."

Toads are similarly attracted by music. We had one which for some years lived in the conservatory and became quite a pet. Whenever the door leading into the drawing-room was open, and there was music going on, it would come crawling in and sit always in the same place to listen.

Most birds love music. I have known canaries make perfect nuisances of themselves when in a room where there is singing, for they join in with such zest that it almost amounts to shouting one down. Parrots and pigeons, on the other hand, listen silently, with evident enjoyment, as though drinking in every note. So with the bullfinch when he is being sung or piped to. There is the well-known case of the pigeon, which, whenever it heard a certain song ("Speri-si," from Handel's "Admetus") played in a house near its dovecote, would fly down and sit on the window-ledge, listening with, apparently, the most pleasing sensations, always returning to the dovecote directly that air was finished.

Spiders are invariably attracted by musical sounds, their taste being for the soft tones of a harp, guitar, or flute. They may often be seen letting themselves down from the ceiling by a line of web, to hang suspended above the instrument that is being played. A celebrated violinist noticed a spider habitually draw near as soon as he began to play, and it gradually became so familiar that it would fix itself on his desk or even on his arm. These insects have also been known to run over the strings of a harp or a guitar while it is being played. If the music becomes too strident, however, they will make a rapid retreat.

Monkeys exhibit great delight when they hear music. One that I knew would take flying leaps, sometimes from the top of the door or curtain-pole, right on to my shoulder directly I sat down to the piano, and put its arms round my neck, crooning in maudlin fashion to show its appreciation of my playing.

Elephants are exceedingly fond of music, and have been known to show marked preference for certain melodies, which is expressed by their gestures. A soft air, performed on a bassoon, will soothe them to gentle emotions, while a lively tune makes them sportive. Like the bear, they want to dance. Bold, blatant music, however, will arouse in them turbulent emotions. They like it no more than do lions or—to my way of thinking—any other beasts. A test of piano-playing was made upon a lion in a menagerie, when it was noticed that the higher notes excited him to instant attention: he stood silent and motionless, but at the sound of loud, deep notes he sprang forward, furiously lashing his tail in a violent attempt to break loose, and giving vent to hideous yells, which only ceased with the music.

Music has a wonderfully stimulating effect upon camels. When fatigued they can be

urged on to fresh exertions by the songs of their drivers. Again, if a camel refuses to suckle its young, the Mongols find that they can usually excite it to perform its duty by chanting to the animal in a plaintive note, something like the cry of a foal.

The Swiss and Tyrolese mountaineers control their flocks by "yodelling," a curious warbling in alternate falsetto and ordinary notes. Other shepherds use the pipe. We are practically the only nation to drive our flocks. Sheep and goats can be enticed from any distance by the strains of music into close proximity of the musician, and, like my field-mouse, be hypnotized to motionless attention. The same applies to the deer and the roe.

Now, having proof of the effect produced by music on so many different species of living creatures, one is led to wonder whether the savagest of wild beasts might not be rendered docile by this means, the point to remember being that there is music *and* music. That which appeals to most animals is the tenderly seductive kind, in a high, rather than a low, key. What interesting experiments might be made by the big-game hunter, from his platform place of vantage up in trees! Hidden from view, were he to sing or play some instrument, the violin or flute (carefully selected gramophone records would answer equally well), he might obtain results most valuable to natural history research. The type of song I have found most fascinating to animals is the "Serenade" from "Pagliacci," "Solveig's Song" from "Peer Gynt," the "Barcarolle" from "Tales of Hoffmann," Schubert's "Serenade," and "Siciliana" from "Cavalleria Rusticana."

It would be wonderful to see the beasts one has stalked and hunted for days drawn from their jungle lairs and lured to one's very feet. I confess I should dearly love to have the opportunity of making this test; but, however great a success I had, personally I could never bring myself to slay any animal trapped in this manner. And I think he would be a poor sportsman who could.

"One monkey I knew would leap on to my shoulder directly I sat down to the piano, and put its arms round my neck."

Doubtless some of these statements of mine will meet with a certain amount of criticism and contradiction. People will declare that their cats and dogs show only aversion to music, and this may be so until they have become accustomed to it. When my cat first heard the piano, at the age of about six months, she was terrified, and crouched away under a cabinet, in the farthest corner of the room. Very soon, however, she got over her fright and ceased to hide, gradually approaching closer, as time went on, until she grew to love it and to enjoy being as near to the music as possible. But she has never had any acquaintance with "jazz," ragtimes, or comic songs, and I advise anyone who wishes to make their animals musical to educate them on good stuff, when, I am sure, they will come to appreciate it.

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS, AND MADELON.—No. 4.

THE CAFÉ OF TERROR

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

THE MARQUIS always talked very bad English when he was angry, and this morning he was very angry indeed. Climbing up narrow and precipitous paths upon a surface of loose stones, pushing his way occasionally through brambles and undergrowth, and looking downwards from heights, which always made him giddy, had been undertakings which had combined to incense him. He was not dressed or built for such mad escapades. The sight of his niece, Madelon, bare-headed and laughing, having the air of one to whom such excursions, instead of being a torture, were a keen pleasure, only irritated him; the final note of exasperation he discovered in the pleasant good temper of Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, their guide and host, who, with a huge cigar in his mouth, was walking with springy steps and unabated cheerfulness up the path which the Marquis had passionately declared to be only fit for goats and idiots.

"I can no further make this absurd promenade," the Marquis announced, sinking on to a heap of stones and dabbing with a scented pocket-handkerchief drops of moisture upon his forehead, which must not be allowed to reach his eyebrows. "It is an absurdity! I have a pain of the stomach, a pain of the knees, a pain of the back. It is not for this I came. Where is the car?"

"Poor uncle!" Madelon sympathized. "I had forgotten that you were not used to walking. You should have lived in England as I have done. But the view—you must admit that the view is marvellous!"

The comments of the Marquis upon the view were delivered in fluent and sacrilegious French. He displayed an acquaintance with the various forms of blasphemy peculiar to his language which moved even Mr. Billingham to wondering admiration.

"When I feel better," he concluded, after a moment's electric pause, "I shall apologize. At present I will only say that the view from the window of my *salon*, which takes in the Casino and all that glorious sea, is better worth having."

"Less than a kilometre to go," Mr. Billingham declared. "I reckon we shall strike the main road just beyond that clump of firs, and that's where I told the car to pick us up. Another quarter of an hour, Marquis, and we shall be in St. Félix."

"If one could only drink something!" the latter observed, pettishly, as he rose to his feet. "I miss my morning *apéritif*."

"That's coming to you, sure," Mr. Billingham promised. "I've done this tramp before, and unless I'm mistaken there's a little *café* where this path joins the cart track."

The prospect was sufficiently encouraging to induce the Marquis to struggle to his feet. They clambered another fifty yards or so up the stony path, and found themselves in a rough track which had evidently been made by the carting of timber from the other side of the ravine. A little way along there was a small, white-plastered building, to which Mr. Billingham pointed.

"The Café du Forêt!" he exclaimed. "The worst ever, so far as I remember, but a Dubonnet won't poison us."

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The Marquis almost smiled.

"A Dubonnet will be acceptable," he admitted. "The place appears poverty-stricken, but if one can secure an unopened bottle——"

"We'll find that," Mr. Billingham interrupted, confidently.

A few minutes' further climb brought them to the *café*. It was small, dilapidated, and uninviting. Nevertheless, it proclaimed itself in rudely-painted black letters to be a restaurant where "Vins et Consommations" were to be obtained. There were three iron tables outside, with a couple of chairs at each, but no sign of life. The door stood open, and his two companions followed Mr. Billingham inside. There was no one behind the little counter, no one in the rude little apartment with its sanded floor and benches in place of chairs. There were bottles upon the shelves, however, and a tumbler half-full of brandy upon the counter. Mr. Billingham raised his voice, and the glasses around shook.

"Hullo, there!" he shouted.

"*Allo, allo!*" the Marquis echoed. "*N'y a-t-il personne ici pour nous servir?*"

There was a stolid, unsympathetic lack of response. They waited for a moment, then Mr. Billingham opened the door of the room behind the bar and glanced around. It was a rough-looking kitchen, with a stone floor and a few clumsy articles of furniture. A string of onions, a scraggy piece of meat, and a rabbit hung down from iron hooks in the ceiling. There were pots and dishes upon the table, but no fire or any sign of recent occupation. Mr. Billingham raised his voice again without result, opened still another door, and called up a flight of flimsy stairs—also without result. Then he returned to his companions.

"There is no one about at all," he announced.

"You might try outside," Madelon suggested.

Outside there was no garden, but a little clearing, a rudely-constructed shed built of pine logs from which the bark had not been stripped, and a lean-to shelter, with a corrugated iron roof, against the wall. Mr. Billingham again, in stentorian tones, invited the presence of the missing innkeeper, and again without response. He returned to the bar.

"Deserted!" he exclaimed.

"They were preparing for a *fête* at the small village we passed through last," Madelon remarked. "Perhaps the people have gone there, or the man may work in the woods."

The Marquis smiled. He had been studying the labels upon the bottles.

"At least," he pointed out, "they have left a bottle of Dubonnet. Produce that excellent corkscrew of yours, my friend Billingham. We will serve ourselves and leave the money."

THEY opened the bottle of Dubonnet which the Marquis had dragged down from the shelf, found some thick wine-glasses, and seated themselves before one of the rude tables outside. Madelon gave a little exclamation of relief as they passed out into the pine-scented sunshine.

"That place gave me the shivers," she declared. "It seemed so very empty, so very silent."

"It's a lonely spot," Mr. Billingham agreed, pouring out the Dubonnet. "They seem to have left off felling the timber round here, and I guess that took the trade away."

"So long as they are absent," the Marquis said, "one owes them gratitude that they left the place open. Never have I tasted Dubonnet with a better flavour. Tell me, my friend Billingham, how much further of this abominable promenade before we reach the car?"

"Not more than half a kilometre," Mr. Billingham assured him. "There's a little path which leads straight up to the road from the cart track. There we shall find the car. In a few minutes more we shall be in St. Félix. After that—the *déjeuner!*"

The Marquis breathed a little sigh of content and helped himself once more from the bottle. Madelon, who had set her glass down empty, was fidgeting about as though anxious to start.

"Hungry?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

She shook her head.

"I have taken a dislike to this place," she confided. "Am I superstitious, I wonder? I have a terrible feeling about it."

The Marquis was sympathetic, but entirely comfortable and not disposed to hurry. He lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

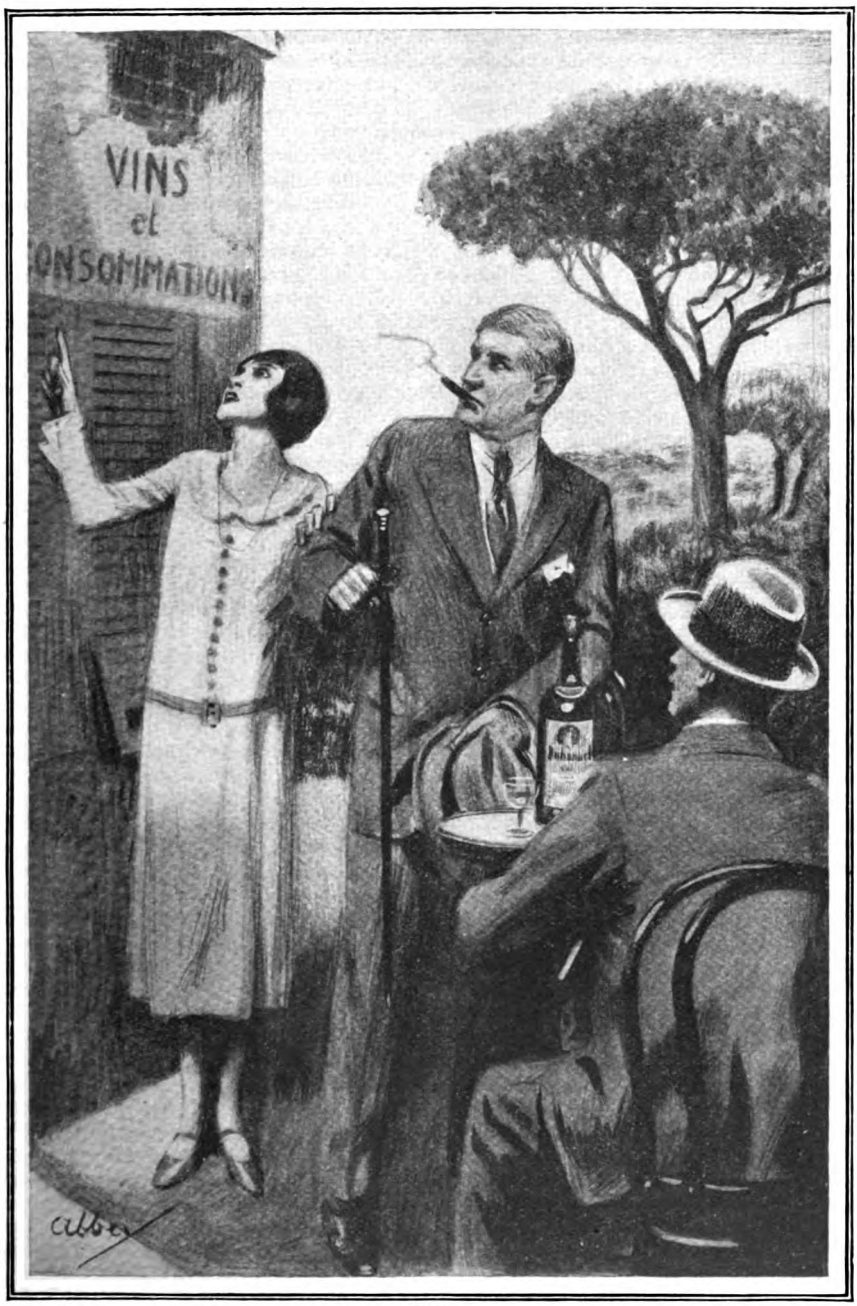
"I understand," he murmured. "A deserted inn on the edge of the forest! There are all the materials here for drama. There was a story I once read——"

He broke off abruptly and the cigarette fell from his fingers. Mr. Billingham sprang to his feet. Madelon, who had wandered a few yards away from them and turned back towards the house, was standing suddenly rigid, suddenly pale. The cry which had startled them had escaped from her lips. She pointed to the window above the door.

"There was a face there!" she cried. "Someone up in the room!"

Mr. Billingham remained composed.

"Well, I guess that isn't so terrible after



Madelon pointed to the window. "There was a face there!" she cried. "Someone up in the room!"

all," he observed. "I dare say there's someone ill here. Who was it—a man or a woman?"

"I do not know," Madelon answered, faintly. "It was—just a face!"

"Seems to have given you a shock," Mr. Billingham continued. "Sit down, Miss Madelon, and drink half a glass more of this stuff. Guess I'd better hunt round and see if there's any help wanted."

Madelon—young woman of nerve and courage though she was—staggered into a chair and was utterly unable to raise to her lips the glass which her uncle hastily filled. Mr. Billingham disappeared inside the building. In about five minutes he returned.

"There's only one room upstairs," he announced, "and there ain't a soul in it."

"But I saw someone," Madelon protested.

He strolled a yard or two away and looked back at the window, pausing a moment to relight his cigar, which had gone out.

"Well, there's no one there now," he assured her. "There's only one room, and not a cupboard for a hiding-place. There are two beds—both look as though they'd been slept in—but there isn't a human being in the shanty. You can take my word for it."

Madelon looked at him steadfastly. She had drunk some of the Dubonnet and she was becoming herself again.

"Do you believe, then," she asked, "that I saw the face of someone who does not exist?"

"I shouldn't say you were the sort who saw spooks," Mr. Billingham admitted. "All I say is, there's no one there now."

"You must surely have realized, my dear Madelon," the Marquis intervened, "whether the face was the face of a man or a woman."

"I should have said that it was the face of a young man," Madelon replied, "but it might have been the face of a girl. There was a mass of black hair. The face itself was smooth. It was the eyes that were horrible."

"You don't say!" Mr. Billingham murmured, with tolerant sympathy. "Kind of scared, were they?"

Madelon rose to her feet.

"Please let us go now," she begged. "I cannot talk about it any more. I can only assure you of one thing. Something terrible has happened here. Please, Mr. Billingham!"

"We'll get right along," was the prompt response. "Ten francs will square us for the bottle of Dubonnet, I guess—ten francs and what's left of the bottle. I'll put it underneath the glass—see? Now we're right! Just a yard or two through the trees and then we'll leave this place behind us."

"I hope," Madelon murmured as they passed swiftly back to the cart track, "that I may be able to forget it."

The Marquis smiled.

"Pooh, pooh, my child!" he exclaimed. "You are too sensitive, too emotional! Material discomforts you scoff at. A fancy sometimes tortures you. Behold the good news!"

He pointed upwards. At the end of the path was the curling main road, and by the side of it the car Mr. Billingham had hired for their day's excursion. No vehicle before had ever appealed so greatly to the Marquis.

"We've struck it right after all," Mr. Billingham declared with satisfaction. "Gee, how hot the sun is out here! Lunch on the terrace in twenty minutes, Miss Madelon. Now let's forget that dirty little shanty and its spook!"

THE spook was not so easy to forget. Madelon, with Mr. Billingham as her escort, was on her way that evening from the Casino to Ciro's, when she suddenly gripped her companion's arm.

"Look!" she cried, in a tone vibrant with absolute terror. "Look! The boy at that table!"

Mr. Billingham's eyes followed her gesture. The young man was certainly an unusual sight in such surroundings. His clothes, although perfectly new, were clumsily fashioned and of the sort worn on *fête* days by the peasants. His hat was pushed to the back of his head, and, although it was of the sombrero order affected by the mountaineers of the district, it failed to conceal the masses of black hair, which gave him almost a grotesque appearance. His complexion was the usual burnt olive of the Provençal labourer. It was again his expression which arrested. His eyes were large and black, without either the vacancy or the humour of the peasant on a holiday. They looked neither at the people who passed, the trees and flowers of the plaza, nor at the bottle of wine which stood half empty by his side. They seemed to be looking at something which, if it existed at all, existed far away.

"That," Madelon said, "was the face I saw at the upstairs window of that place this morning."

Her hand was clutching nervously at his arm. Mr. Billingham patted it gently.

"Say, this boy has got on your nerves some," he declared. "I'll go across and have a talk to him. Sit down and wait for me."

"I think I will for a moment," Madelon acquiesced.

She seated herself on one of the benches by the side of the pavement. Mr. Billingham crossed the road and addressed the boy in hesitating but comprehensible French.

"Do you belong to the inn up near St. Félix?" he inquired. "The young lady and I were there this morning."

The boy stared at his questioner for a moment with parted lips and terrified

expression. He made absolutely no reply, however.

"We could not find anyone there," Mr. Billingham continued, speaking with laborious care. "We hoped there was nothing wrong."

The boy broke out into a stream of rapid, unintelligible speech, to which Mr. Billingham listened in ever-increasing confusion. He turned round to find Madelon by his side.

"Say, this young goat-herd has got hold of a lingo of his own," he complained. "I don't know as anyone but a monkey could tell what he's chattering about. Seems kind of annoyed with me, but I can't get a word of it."

"It is the dialect of the Italians here," Madelon explained. "Let me try."

She spoke to him patiently. The boy only shook his head. Presently he poured out another glass of wine and drank it. Then he sat quite still, stolid and inattentive. He took no notice of Madelon's questions. He showed no sign of understanding a word she said. In the end she was seized by a sudden revulsion. She tugged at her companion's arm.

"Come away!" she begged. "He will not reply. He pretends not to understand me, though I believe that he does. Let us leave him."

"Guess you're right," Mr. Billingham assented. "He's a crazy loon, if ever there was one, or he wouldn't speak such gibberish. Anyway, it's not our business."

They passed on. The young man looked after them sullenly and helped himself to more wine. Ten minutes later, when Mr. Billingham, obeying an unaccountable impulse, chose a moment when Madelon was talking to some acquaintances and hurried back, the chair was empty. The young man was gone.

"Anyway," Mr. Billingham murmured to himself, struggling against a curious feeling of uneasiness, "it ain't our affair."

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that Mr. Billingham had twice declared that whatever trouble there might be or have been at the little inn on the edge of the forest was not his affair, it was barely ten o'clock in the morning when he left the car, which he had hired in the Square at Monte Carlo, clambered down the steep path, made his way along the cart track, pushed through the clump of trees, and found himself before the *café*. There was no smoke emerging from the chimney, and Mr. Billingham gave a little start of surprise as he saw on the table in front of the still open door the half-consumed bottle of Dubonnet and the ten-franc note under one of the glasses.

"I guess passers-by round here are pretty scarce," he ruminated. "Seems queer that whoever quit the place didn't trouble to lock up. Left in a hurry, perhaps."

Mr. Billingham would doubtless have scorned the suggestion that he talked to himself for the fact of any pleasure he might derive from hearing his own voice, and yet it was without a doubt true that the uneasy feeling of the day before had returned to an even larger extent. He pushed open the door. The half-emptied tumbler was still upon the counter. Some little disarrangement of the bottles upon the shelf, effected by their removal of the bottle of Dubonnet, still existed. He threw open the door leading to the kitchen and called out.

"Hullo, there!"

There was no reply. He mounted the stairs with footsteps which he was half ashamed to admit were reluctant ones. The bedroom was as empty as it had been on the previous day. There was no place to hide anywhere—no other room. As he descended, however, he realized that it was perfectly possible for the owner of the face whom Madelon had seen there to have escaped by the back door and reached the wood in the matter of a very few seconds. He returned to the kitchen. Here he noticed for the first time that by the side of the fireplace was a clumsy framework door, which looked as though it might have led into a pantry or cupboard. He moved towards it and raised the latch. Before he threw the door open, he knew. When he closed it again—in the space of a second or two—there were great beads of perspiration upon his forehead. The colour had left his cheeks and the blood seemed to have been drained from his body. He staggered out into the bar, gripped the counter for a moment, saw a bottle of Martell's brandy on the bottom row of the shelf, seized it, made his faltering way outside, knocked off its neck against the top of one of the iron tables, and drank. Mr. Billingham was a strong man, and his recovery was prompt. Nevertheless he was breathing heavily as he hastened up the hill to where his car was waiting.

"Drive to the Mairie at St. Félix," he ordered.

Arrived at the Mairie—a small wistaria-covered building on the outskirts of the straggling village of St. Félix—Mr. Billingham was ushered at once by a gendarme into a bare little apartment with whitewashed walls and a row of benches, in which a very formal-looking gentleman, with a closely-trimmed black beard, very smoothly-brushed hair, and gold-rimmed pince-nez, was seated at a table, signing documents. His work for the morning had consisted

of adjudicating upon a highly important case of fowl-stealing, and he looked with some surprise at his visitor's precipitate entrance. Mr. Billingham's opening statement was in far from lucid English. The magistrate, with a puzzled expression, waved him to a seat.

"*Comment, monsieur?*" he exclaimed.

Mr. Billingham pulled himself together. His French, though not rapid, was fairly precise, and he had no difficulty in making himself understood.

"A woman has been murdered at a little *café* at the edge of the forest," he announced.

The magistrate gasped. The gendarme gasped.

"Continue, monsieur," the former begged.

Mr. Billingham told his story. The magistrate gave him his entire attention. It was a great day, this! A murder! Obviously a murder, in his district! He began to make notes of Mr. Billingham's statement. He was friendly but official. It was quite hopeless for him to conceal the fact that the news had filled him with pleasurable interest. It had been the secret desire of his life to have the handling of such a case.

"I will accompany you to the inn myself at once, monsieur," he announced, rising to his feet. "You can accommodate a gendarme, perhaps, on the front of your car. Let the court remain open till my return," he directed a subordinate. "Tell me again your story as we proceed, monsieur."

Mr. Billingham went through the few facts again. In response to his own inquiries the magistrate gave him certain information.

"The inn," he said, "was kept by a very respectable good man, of the name of Pierre Anson. He lived there with his wife, the woman who without a doubt is the victim, and his nephew, a young man of whom one hears not too much of good. The wife, it is reported, had savings—savings of some account—and the nephew knew it. Three days ago news came to Anson of the death of a relative in Marseilles. This I know, because he came to me for information as to the burying of the relative and as to his journey. He set off last Monday morning. He was expecting to return to-night. He left alone his wife and this nephew. One fears to reflect what may have happened!"

Mr. Billingham staggered out into the bar.

Mr. Billingham sighed, because he was a kind-hearted man, and because a vision of that flashing knife of the guillotine is terrible to such. Nevertheless, it was his duty.

"Last night," he confided, "the young man, who apparently was the nephew of Pierre Anson, was drinking wine at the Café de Paris in Monte Carlo. He was pointed

out to me by the young lady who declared that his was the face she saw at the window."

The magistrate nodded gravely.

"It is a crime," he said, "in effect simple, not uncommon amongst this race of people. When heated with wine and drunk with the desire of pleasure, the shedding of blood is nothing. I, who tell you this, know."

They arrived at their destination. The magistrate and the gendarme made their way to the little room. Mr. Billingham sat outside. He had no soul for horrors. It was an hour before they rejoined him. The magistrate was carrying his notebook in his hand.

"All is clear," he announced. "The savings of the poor woman have disappeared. To-night, or to-morrow at the latest, the young man will be in our hands. Your name and address, if you please, monsieur. You will attend the court?"

"Certainly," Mr. Billingham promised.

"The young man," the magistrate continued, "will have had two nights of that wild pleasure of which he has lain awake, here in this place of tranquillity, and dreamed. Afterwards—well, he may escape with the penitentiary. One knows little of his age."

Mr. Billingham looked up at the blank window. The silence which brooded over the place remained unbroken. The gendarme, having closed the door, seated himself outside.

"Pierre Anson will arrive by the night train," the magistrate remarked. "It will be a sad home-coming for him."

"Better," Mr. Billingham rejoined, with a little shiver, "than if he had found the house empty and opened that door, as I did."

THE most pathetic sight in the bare, whitewashed little room of the Mairie on the first morning of the examination was Pierre Anson, the woodman. The tears streamed down his brown, wrinkled face as the magistrate addressed his first few kindly questions. He had at one time, as was evident, been a man of great stature and strength. Now he seemed shrunken up, stricken with the horror of his home-coming.

"Your wife had savings, Pierre Anson?" the magistrate asked him.

"She was a thrifty woman," was the tremulous reply. "She had always a stocking."

"Do you know how much was in it?"

"She never told me."

"Did your nephew—the young man between the gendarmes there—the young man whom you trusted alone with your wife—did he know?"

"I cannot tell," Pierre Anson answered. "He was always wanting money."

"You have been to Marseilles to bury a relative—is it not so?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You thought it safe to leave this youth, of whose character we hear little that is good, alone with your wife in such a desolate spot?"

"She was his aunt," the man announced, with a little sob. "How would I dream of anything so horrible?"

The magistrate bent over his papers. Mr. Billingham, seated by his side, watched the shaft of sunlight which had found its way through the cobwebbed windows and had fallen upon the boy's face. Madelon, who had also been invited by the magistrate to occupy a chair near him, scribbled something on a piece of paper and passed it to her neighbour. He glanced at it and passed it on to the magistrate, who studied it through his pince-nez with pursed lips. Finally, with a little shrug of the shoulders, he twiddled it between his fingers.

"Where did you stay in Marseilles, Pierre Anson?" he asked, suddenly.

The woodman lifted his head and stared uncomprehendingly at his questioner.

"I asked you where you stayed in Marseilles," the magistrate repeated.

Pierre Anson shook his head.

"I do not remember," he said. "It was a small lodging-house down by the quay."

"You do not remember?" the magistrate echoed, in a tone of some surprise. "Is that not strange, Pierre Anson?"

"It was somewhere near where my cousin lay dead," the man answered, a little sullenly. "I could find the place—the name I never knew."

The magistrate's right arm suddenly shot out.

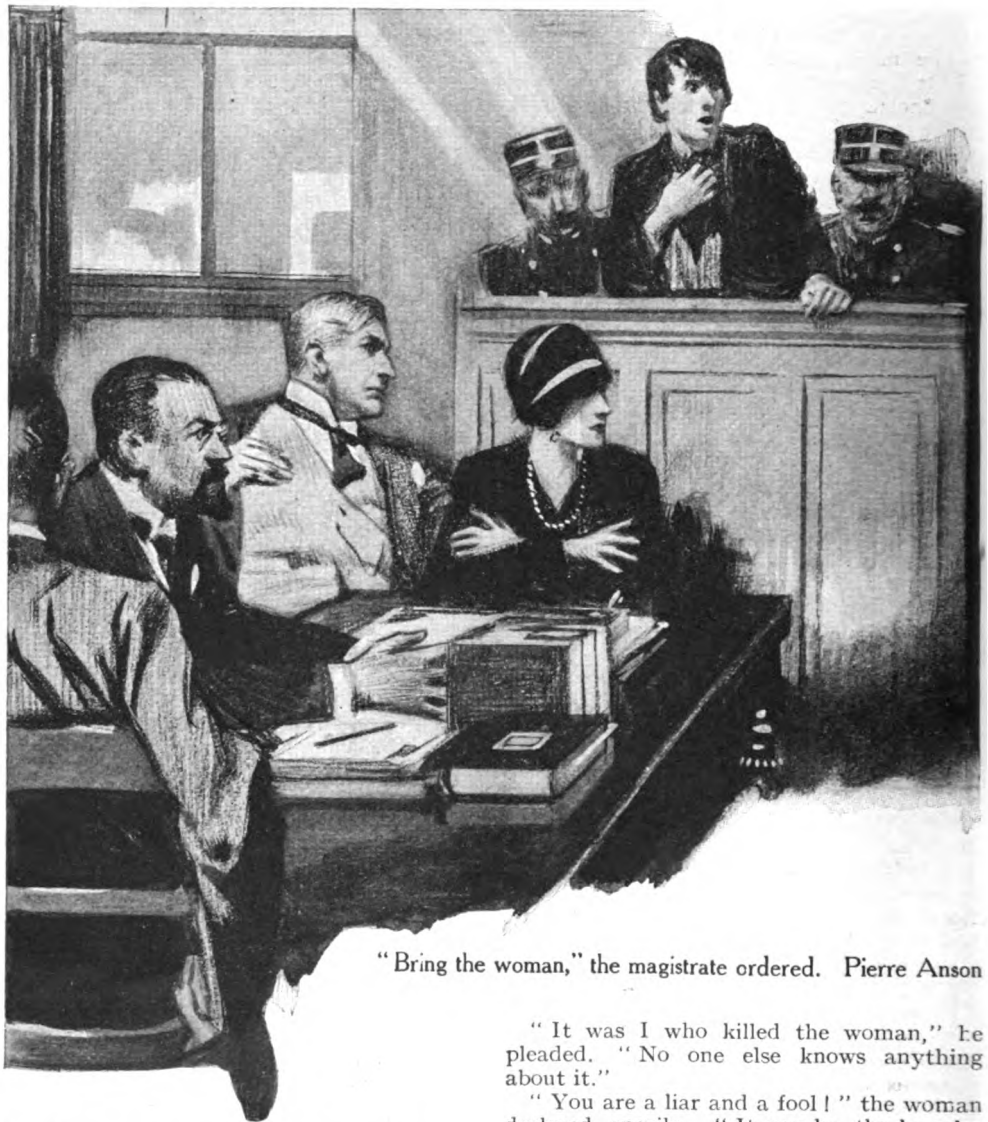
"Or is it that you are lying, Pierre Anson?" he thundered. "Is it that you yourself, before you left home in the small hours of that Tuesday morning, murdered your wife and stole her savings, forced two of the notes on that half-witted youth, persuaded him to buy clothes and go down to Monte Carlo, and went yourself to Nice—your rendezvous at Nice—to your rendezvous with Lucie Bérard?"

The man half rose to his feet. His eyes seemed suddenly bloodshot. He swayed about as though striving to speak.

"Bring the woman," the magistrate ordered.

Pierre Anson glanced fearfully in the direction of the door. A woman in the care of a gendarme entered. They looked at one another—the man and the woman—and one understood.

"The money of which you robbed your wife, Pierre Anson," the magistrate continued, "was found upon this woman.



"Bring the woman," the magistrate ordered. Pierre Anson

You have visited her month by month in Nice. You would have thrust the burden of this crime upon your nephew. You yourself are the murderer! Do you confess?"

A cry rang through the court—not from the man, Pierre Anson, who was indeed incapable of speech, whose hands were fighting the air, who fought against unconsciousness, but from the boy who stood between the gendarmes. His eyes were fixed upon the woman who had entered the court-room. His indifference had vanished. His eyes again were lit with fear.

"Mother!" he cried.

"It is I!" she answered.

The boy turned towards the magistrate.

"It was I who killed the woman," he pleaded. "No one else knows anything about it."

"You are a liar and a fool!" the woman declared, angrily. "It was he, the bungler there," she added, pointing to Pierre Anson. "And there is the money."

She dashed a bundle of notes upon the floor and stood with folded arms, defiant, the incarnation of an evil spirit. A gendarme touched Pierre Anson upon the shoulder. The proceedings were over.

AFTERWARDS the magistrate entertained his two distinguished guests with a bottle of sweet wine and biscuits in his retiring room. He was well pleased with the whole business.

"Amongst the lowest classes of our peasants," he explained, "these family dramas are not uncommon. Pierre Anson,

glanced fearfully in the direction of the door. A woman in the care of a gendarme entered.

as the story goes now, loved both sisters. He married the older one—a widow with money. The rest of the story unfolds itself. Yet Pierre Anson had cunning which few of these peasants possess. He deceived us all. It is to you, monsieur," he added, turning to Mr. Billingham, " that we owe the clue by means of which we arrived at the truth."

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

" Not to me," he rejoined—" to the young lady."

The magistrate bowed.

" Then might one inquire," he ventured, " what led the young lady to doubt the lad's guilt ? "

Madelon was once more serious.

" Something in his eyes," she confided, with a little shudder of reminiscence— " something which was there and something which was not there."

The magistrate raised his glass and bowed first to Madelon then to Mr. Billingham.

" Something in his eyes," he repeated. " Well, one reads somewhere, in a lay commentary upon our laws and the discovery of crime, that the born detective must have an instinct for the truth. Mademoiselle, there is a great vocation open to you."

Madelon smiled. She sipped her wine, but she remained silent.

(Another story in this series will appear next month.)

WITHOUT THE OPTION

Illustrated by A. Wallis Mills

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

THE evidence was all in. The machinery of the Law had worked without a hitch. And the beak, having adjusted a pair of pince-nez which looked as though they were going to do a nose-dive any moment, coughed like a pained sheep and slipped us the bad news.

"The prisoner Wooster," he said—and who can paint the shame and agony of Bertram at hearing himself so described?—"will pay a fine of five pounds."

"Oh, rather," I said.

"Absolutely. Like a shot."

I was dashed glad to get the thing settled at such a reasonable figure. I gazed across what they call the sea of faces till I picked up Jeeves, sitting at the back. Stout fellow, he had come to see the young master through his hour of trial.

"I say, Jeeves," I sang out, "have you got a fiver? I'm a bit short."

"Silence!" bellowed some officious blighter.

"It's all right," I said. "Just arranging the financial details. Got the stuff, Jeeves?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good egg!"

"Are you a friend of the prisoner?" asked the beak.

"I am in Mr. Wooster's employment, your worship, in the capacity of gentleman's personal gentleman."

"Then pay the fine to the clerk."

"Very good, your worship."

The beak gave a coldish nod in my direction, as much as to say that they might now strike the fetters from my wrists; and, having hitched up the pince-nez once more, proceeded to hand poor old Sippy one of the nastiest looks ever seen in Bosher Street police-court.

"The case of the prisoner Leon Trotsky—which," he said, giving Sippy the eye again, "I am strongly inclined to think an assumed and fictitious name—is more serious

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He has been convicted of a wanton and violent assault upon the police. The evidence of the officer has proved that the prisoner struck him in the abdomen, causing severe internal pain, and in other ways interfered with him in the execution of his duties. I am aware that on the night following the annual aquatic contest between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge a certain licence is traditionally granted by the authorities, but aggravated acts of ruffianly hooliganism like that of the prisoner Trotsky cannot be overlooked or palliated. He will serve a sentence of thirty days in the second division without the option of a fine."

"No, I say—here!—hi!—dash it all!" protested poor old Sippy.

"Silence!" bellowed the officious blighter.

"Next case," said the beak.

And that was that.

THE whole affair was most unfortunate. Memory is a trifle blurred, but, as far as I can piece together the facts, what happened was more or less this.

Abstemious cove though I am as a general thing, there is one night in the year when, putting all other engagements aside, I am rather apt to let myself go a bit and renew my lost youth, as it were. The night to which I allude is the one following the annual aquatic contest between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge—or, putting it another way, Boat-Race night. Then, if ever, you will see Bertram under the influence. And on this occasion, I freely admit, I had been doing myself rather juicily, with the result that when I ran into old Sippy opposite the Empire I was in quite fairly bonhomous mood.

This being so, it cut me to the quick to perceive that Sippy, generally the brightest of revellers, was far from being his usual sunny self. He had the air of a man with a secret sorrow.

"Bertie," he said, as we strolled along towards Piccadilly Circus, "the heart bowed down by weight of woe to weakest hope will cling." Sippy is by way of being an author, though mainly dependent for the necessaries of life on subsidies from an old aunt who lives in the country, and his conversation often takes a literary turn, especially on Boat-Race night. "But the trouble is that I have no hope to cling to, weak or otherwise. I am up against it, Bertie."

"In what way, laddie?"

"I've got to go to-morrow and spend three weeks with some absolutely dud—I will go further, some positively scaly friends of my Aunt Vera. She has fixed the thing up, and may a nephew's curse blister every bulb in her garden."

"Who are these hounds of hell?" I asked sympathetically.

"Some people named Pringle. I haven't seen them since I was ten, but I remember them at that time striking me as England's premier warts."

"Tough luck. No wonder you've lost your morale."

"The world," said Sippy, "is very grey. How can I shake off this awful depression?"

It was then that I got one of those bright ideas one does get round about eleven-thirty on Boat Race night.

"What you want, old man," I said, "is a policeman's helmet."

"Do I, Bertie?"

"If I were you, I'd just step straight across the street and get that one over there."

"But there's a policeman inside it. You can see him distinctly."

"What does that matter?" I said. I simply couldn't follow his reasoning.

Sippy stood for a moment in thought.

"I believe you're absolutely right," he said at last. "Funny I never thought of it before. You really recommend me to get that helmet?"

"I do indeed."

"Then I will," said Sippy, brightening up in the most remarkable manner.

So there you have the posish., and you can see why, as I left the dock, a free man, remorse gnawed at my vitals. In his twenty-fifth year, with life opening out before him and all that sort of thing, Oliver Randolph Sipperley had become a jail-bird, and it was all my fault. It was I who had dragged that fine spirit down into the mire, so to speak, and the question now arose, What could I do to atone?

Obviously, the first move must be to get in touch with Sippy and see if he had any last messages, and what not. I pushed about a bit, making inquiries, and presently found myself in a little dark room with whitewashed walls and a wooden bench. Sippy was sitting on the bench with his head in his hands.

"How are you, old lad?" I asked in a hushed, bedside voice.

"I'm a ruined man," said Sippy, looking like a poached egg.

"Oh, come," I said, "it's not so bad as all that. I mean to say, you had the swift intelligence to give a false name. There won't be anything about you in the papers."

"I'm not worrying about the papers. What's bothering me is, How can I go and spend three weeks with the Pringles, starting to-day, when I've got to sit in a prison cell with a ball and chain on my ankle?"

"But you said you didn't want to go."

"It isn't a question of wanting, fathead. I've got to go. If I don't, my aunt will find

out where I am. And if she finds out that I am doing thirty days without the option in the lowest dungeon beneath the castle moat—well, where shall I get off ? "

I saw his point.

" This is not a thing we can settle for ourselves," I said, gravely. " We must put our trust in a higher power. Jeeves is the man we must consult."

And, having collected a few of the necessary data, I shook his hand, patted him on the back, and tooled off home.

" JEEVES," I said, when I had climbed outside the pick-me-up which he had thoughtfully prepared against my coming, " I've got something to tell you. Something important. Something that vitally affects one whom you have always regarded with—one whom you have always looked upon—one whom you have—well, to cut a long story short, as I'm not feeling quite myself—Mr. Sipperley."

" Yes, sir ? "

" Jeeves, Mr. Souperley is in the sip."

" Sir ? "

" I mean, Mr. Sipperley is in the soup."

" Indeed, sir ? "

" And all owing to me. It was I who, in a moment of mistaken kindness, wishing only to cheer him up and give him something to occupy his mind, recommended him to pinch that policeman's helmet."

" Is that so, sir ? "

" Do you mind not intoning the responses, Jeeves ? " I said. " This is a most complicated story for a man with a headache to have to tell, and if you interrupt you'll make me lose the thread. As a favour to me, therefore, don't do it. Just nod every now and then to show you're following."

I closed my eyes and marshalled the facts.

" To start with, then, Jeeves, you may or may not know that Mr. Sipperley is practically dependent on his Aunt Vera."

" Would that be Miss Sipperley of the Paddock, Beckley-on-the-Moor, in Yorkshire, sir ? "

" Yes. Don't tell me you know her ? "

" Not personally, sir. But I have a cousin residing in the village who has some slight acquaintance with Miss Sipperley. He has described her to me as an imperious and quick-tempered old lady—— But I beg your pardon, sir, I should have nodded."

" Quite right, you should have nodded. Yes, Jeeves, you should have nodded. But it's too late now."

I nodded myself. I hadn't had my eight hours the night before, and what you might call a lethargy was showing a tendency to steal over me from time to time.

" Yes, sir ? " said Jeeves.

" Oh, ah, yes," I said, giving myself a bit of a hitch up. " Where had I got to ? "

" You were saying that Mr. Sipperley is practically dependent upon Miss Sipperley, sir."

" Was I ? "

" You were, sir."

" You're perfectly right. So I was. Well, then, you can readily understand, Jeeves, that he has got to take jolly good care to keep in with her. You get that ? "

Jeeves nodded.

" Now mark this closely. The other day she wrote to old Sippy, telling him to come down and sing at her village concert. It was equivalent to a royal command, if you see what I mean, so Sippy couldn't refuse in so many words. But he had sung at her village concert once before and had got the bird in no uncertain manner, so he wasn't playing any return dates. You follow so far, Jeeves ? "

Jeeves nodded.

" So what did he do, Jeeves ? He did what seemed to him at the moment a rather brainy thing. He told her that, while he would have been delighted to sing at her village concert, by a most unfortunate chance an editor had commissioned him to write a series of articles on the Colleges of Cambridge, and he was obliged to pop down there at once and would be away for quite three weeks. All clear up to now ? "

Jeeves inclined the coco-nut.

" Whereupon, Jeeves, Miss Sipperley wrote back saying that she quite realized that work must come before pleasure—pleasure being her loose way of describing the act of singing songs at the Beckley-on-the-Moor concert and getting the laugh from the local toughs ; but that, if he was going to Cambridge, he must certainly stay with her friends, the Pringles, at their house just outside the town. And she dropped them a line telling them to expect him on the twenty-eighth, and they dropped another line saying Right-ho, and the thing was settled. And now Mr. Sipperley is in the jug, and what will be the ultimate outcome or upshot ? Jeeves, it is a problem worthy of your great intellect. I rely on you."

" I will do my best to justify your confidence, sir."

" Carry on, then. And, meanwhile, pull down the blinds and bring a couple more cushions and heave that small chair this way so that I can put my feet up, and then go away and brood and let me hear from you in—say—a couple of hours. Or, maybe, three. And if anybody calls and wants to see me, inform them that I am dead."

" Dead, sir ? "

" Dead. You won't be so far wrong."

IT must have been well towards evening when I woke up with a crick in my neck, but otherwise somewhat refreshed. I pressed the bell.

"I looked in twice, sir," said Jeeves, "but on each occasion you were asleep and I did not like to disturb you."

"The right spirit, Jeeves. Well?"

"I have been giving close thought to the little problem which you indicated, sir, and I can see only one solution."

"One is enough. What do you suggest?"

"I say, Jeeves," I sang out, "have you got a fiver? I'm a bit short."

"That you go to Cambridge in Mr. Sipperley's place, sir."

I stared at the man. Certainly I was feeling a good deal better than I had been a few hours before, but I was far from being in a fit condition to have rot like this talked to me.

"Jeeves," I said, sternly, "pull yourself together. This is mere babble from the sick-bed."

"I fear I can suggest no other plan of action, sir, which will extricate Mr. Sipperley from his dilemma."

"But think! Reflect! Why, even I, in spite of having had a disturbed night and a most painful morning with the minions of the Law, can see that the scheme is a loony one. To put the finger on only one leak in the thing, it isn't me these people want to see, it's Mr. Sipperley. They don't know me from Adam."

"So much the better, sir. For what I am suggesting is that you go to Cambridge affecting actually to be Mr. Sipperley."

This was too much.

"Jeeves," I said, and I'm not half sure there weren't tears in my eyes, "surely you can see for yourself that this is pure banana-oil. It is not like you to come into the presence of a sick man and gibber."

"I think the plan I have suggested would be practicable, sir. While you were sleeping I was able to have a few words with Mr. Sipperley, and he informed me that Professor and Mrs. Pringle have not set eyes upon him since he was a lad of ten."

"No, that's true. He told me that. But, even so, they would be sure to ask him questions about my aunt—or, rather, his aunt. Where would I be then?"

"Mr. Sipperley was kind enough to give me a few facts respecting Miss Sipperley, sir, which I jotted down. With these, added to what my cousin has told me of the lady's

habits, I think you would be in a position to answer any ordinary question."

There is something dashed insidious about Jeeves. Time and again since we first came together he has stunned me with some apparently drivelling suggestion or scheme or ruse or plan of campaign, and after about five minutes has convinced me that it is not only sound, but fruity. It took nearly a quarter of an hour to reason me into this particular one, it being considerably the weirdest to date; but he did it. I was holding out pretty firmly, when he suddenly clinched the thing.

"I would certainly suggest, sir," he said, 'that you left London as soon as possible and remained hid for some little time in some retreat where you would not be likely to be found."

"Eh? Why?"

"During the last hour Mrs. Spencer has been on the telephone three times, sir, endeavouring to get into communication with you."

"Aunt Agatha!" I cried, paling beneath my tan.

"Yes, sir. I gathered from her remarks that she had been reading in the evening paper a report of this morning's proceedings in the police-court."

I hopped from the chair like a jack-rabbit of the prairie. If Aunt Agatha was out with her hatchet, a move was most certainly indicated.

"Jeeves," I said, "this is a time for deeds, not words. Pack—and that right speedily."

"I have packed, sir."

"Find out when there is a train for Cambridge."

"There is one in forty minutes, sir."

"Call a taxi."

"A taxi is at the door, sir."

"Good!" I said. "Then lead me to it."

THE Maison Pringle was quite a bit of a way out of Cambridge, a mile or two down the Trumpington Road; and when I arrived everybody was dressing for dinner. So it wasn't till I had shoved on the evening raiment and got down to the drawing-room that I met the gang.

"Hullo-ullo!" I said, taking a deep breath and floating in.

I tried to speak in a clear and ringing voice, but I wasn't feeling my chirpiest. It is always a nervous job for a diffident and unassuming bloke to visit a strange house for the first time; and it doesn't make the thing any better when he goes there pretending to be another fellow. I was conscious of a rather pronounced sinking feeling, which the appearance of the Pringles did nothing to allay.

Sippy had described them as England's premier warts, and it looked to me as if he might be about right. Professor Pringle was a thinnish, baldish, dyspeptic-lookingish cove with an eye like a haddock, while Mrs. Pringle's aspect was that of one who had had bad news round about the year 1900 and never really got over it. And I was just staggering under the impact of these two when I found myself being introduced to a couple of ancient females with shawls all over them.

"No doubt you remember my mother?" said Professor Pringle, mournfully, indicating Exhibit A.

"Oh, ah!" I said, achieving a bit of a beam.

"And my aunt," sighed the Prof., as if things were getting worse and worse.

"Well, well, well!" I said, shooting another beam in the direction of Exhibit B.

"They were saying only this morning that they remembered you," groaned the Prof., abandoning all hope.

There was a pause. The whole strength of the company gazed at me like a family group out of one of Edgar Allan Poe's less cheery yarns, and I felt my *joie de vivre* dying at the roots.

"I remember Oliver," said Exhibit A. She heaved a sigh. "He was such a pretty child. What a pity! What a pity!"

Tactful, of course, and calculated to put the guest completely at his ease.

"I remember Oliver," said Exhibit B, looking at me in much the same way as the Bosher Street beak had looked at Sippy before putting on the black cap. "Nasty little boy! He teased my cat."

"Aunt Jane's memory is wonderful, considering that she will be eighty-seven next birthday," whispered Mrs. Pringle with mournful pride.

"What did you say?" asked the Exhibit suspiciously.

"I said your memory was wonderful."

"Ah!" The dear old creature gave me another glare. I could see that no beautiful friendship was to be looked for by Bertram in this quarter. "He chased my Tibby all over the garden, shooting arrows at her from a bow."

At this moment a cat strolled out from under the sofa and made for me with its tail up. Cats always do take to me, which made it all the sadder that I should be saddled with Sippy's criminal record. I stooped to tickle it under the ear, such being my invariable policy, and the Exhibit uttered a piercing cry.

"Stop him! Stop him!"

She moved forward, moving uncommonly well for one of her years, and, having scooped up the cat, stood eyeing me with

Having scooped up the cat, she stood eyeing me with bitter defiance.
"I like cats," I said feebly.

bitter defiance, as if daring me to start anything. Most unpleasant.

"I like cats," I said feebly.

It didn't go. The sympathy of the audience was not with me. And conversation was at what you might call a low ebb, when the door opened and a girl came in.

"My daughter Heloise," said the Prof. moodily, as if he hated to admit it.

I turned to mitt the female, and stood there with my hand out, gaping. I can't remember when I've had such a nasty shock.

I suppose everybody has had the experience of suddenly meeting somebody who reminded them frightfully of some fearful person. I mean to say, by way of an example, once when I was golfing in Scotland I saw a woman come into the hotel who was the living image of my Aunt Agatha. Probably a very decent sort, if I had only waited to see, but I didn't wait. I legged it that evening, utterly unable to stand the spectacle. And on another occasion I was driven out of a thoroughly festive night-club because the head waiter reminded me of my Uncle Percy.

Well, Heloise Pringle in the most ghastly way resembled Honoria Glossop.

I think I may have told you before about this Glossop scourge. She was the daughter of Sir Roderick Glossop, the loony-doctor, and I had been engaged to her for about three weeks, much against my wishes, when the old boy most fortunately got the idea that I was off my rocker and put the bee on the proceedings. Since then the mere thought of her had been enough to make me start out of my sleep with a loud cry. And this girl was exactly like her.

" Er—how are you ? " I said.

" How do you do ? "

Her voice put the lid on it. It might have been Honoria herself talking. Honoria Glossop has a voice like a lion-tamer making some authoritative announcement to one of the troupe, and so had this girl. I backed away convulsively and sprang upwards as my foot stubbed itself against something squashy. A sharp yowl rent the air, followed by an indignant cry, and I turned to see Aunt Jane, on all fours, trying to put things right with the cat, which had gone to earth under the sofa. She gave me a look, and I could see that her worst fears had been realized.

At this juncture dinner was announced—not before I was ready for it.

" JEEVES," I said, when I got him alone that night, " I am no faint-heart, but I am inclined to think that this binge is going to prove a shade above the odds."

" You are not enjoying your visit, sir ? "

" I am not, Jeeves. Have you seen Miss Pringle ? "

" Yes, sir. From a distance."

" The best way to see her. Did you observe her keenly ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Did she remind you of anybody ? "

" She appeared to me to bear a remarkable likeness to her cousin, Miss Glossop, sir."

" Her cousin ! You don't mean to say she's Honoria Glossop's cousin ? "

" Yes, sir. Mrs. Pringle was a Miss Blatherwick—the younger of two sisters, the elder of whom married Sir Roderick Glossop."

" Great Scott ! That accounts for the resemblance."

' Yes, sir."

"And what a resemblance, Jeeves ! She even talks like Miss Glossop."

" Indeed, sir ? I have not yet heard Miss Pringle speak."

" You have missed little. And what it amounts to, Jeeves, is that, while nothing will induce me to let old Sippy down, I can see that this visit is going to try me high. At a pinch I could stand the Prof. and wife. I could even make the effort of a lifetime and bear up against Aunt Jane. But to expect a man to mix daily with the girl Heloise—and to do it, what is more, on lemonade, which is all there was to drink at dinner—is to ask too much of him. What shall I do, Jeeves ? "

" I think that you should avoid Miss Pringle's society as much as possible."

" The same great thought had occurred to me," I said.

It is all very well, though, to talk airily about avoiding a female's society ; but when you are living in the same house with her and she doesn't want to avoid you, it takes a bit of doing. It is a peculiar thing in life that the people you most particularly want to edge away from always seem to cluster round like a poultice. I hadn't been twenty-four hours in the place before I perceived that I was going to see a lot of this pestilence.

She was one of those girls you're always meeting on the stairs and in passages. I couldn't go into a room without seeing her drift in a minute later. And if I walked in the garden, she was sure to leap out at me from a laurel bush or the onion bed or something. By about the tenth day I had begun to feel absolutely haunted.

" Jeeves," I said, " I have begun to feel absolutely haunted."

" Sir ? "

" This woman dogs me. I never seem to get a moment to myself. Old Sippy was supposed to come here to make a study of the Cambridge colleges, and she took me round about fifty-seven this morning. This afternoon I went to sit in the garden, and she popped up through a trap and was in my midst. This evening she cornered me in the morning-room. It's getting so that when I have a bath I wouldn't be a bit surprised to find her nestling in the soap dish."

" Extremely trying, sir."

" Dashed so ! Have you any remedy to suggest ? "

" Not at the moment, sir. Miss Pringle does appear to be distinctly interested in you, sir. She was asking me questions this morning respecting your mode of life in London."

" What ! "

" Yes, sir."

I stared at the man in horror. A ghastly thought had struck me. I quivered like an aspen.

At lunch that day a curious thing had happened. We had just finished mangling the cutlets, and I was sitting back in my chair, taking a bit of an easy before being allotted my slab of boiled pudding, when, happening to look up, I caught the girl Heloise's eye fixed on me in what seemed to me a rather rummy manner. I didn't think much about it at the time, because boiled pudding is a thing you have to give your undivided attention to if you want to do yourself justice ; but now, recalling the episode in the light of Jeeves's words, the full sinister meaning of the thing seemed to come home to me. Even at the moment, something about that look had struck me as oddly familiar, and now I suddenly saw why. It had been the identical look which I had observed in the

eye of Honoria Glossop in the days immediately preceding our engagement—the look of a tigress that has marked down its prey.

"Jeeves, do you know what I think?"

"Sir?"

I gulped slightly.

"Jeeves," I said, "listen attentively. I don't want to give the impression that I consider myself one of those deadly birds who exercise an irresistible fascination over one and all, and can't meet a girl without wrecking her peace of mind in the first half-minute. As a matter of fact, it's rather the other way with me, for girls on entering my presence are mostly inclined to give me the raised eyebrow and the twitching upper lip. Nobody, therefore, can say that I am a cove who's likely to take alarm unnecessarily. You admit that, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nevertheless, Jeeves, it is a known scientific fact that there is a particular type of female that does seem strangely attracted to the sort of fellow I am."

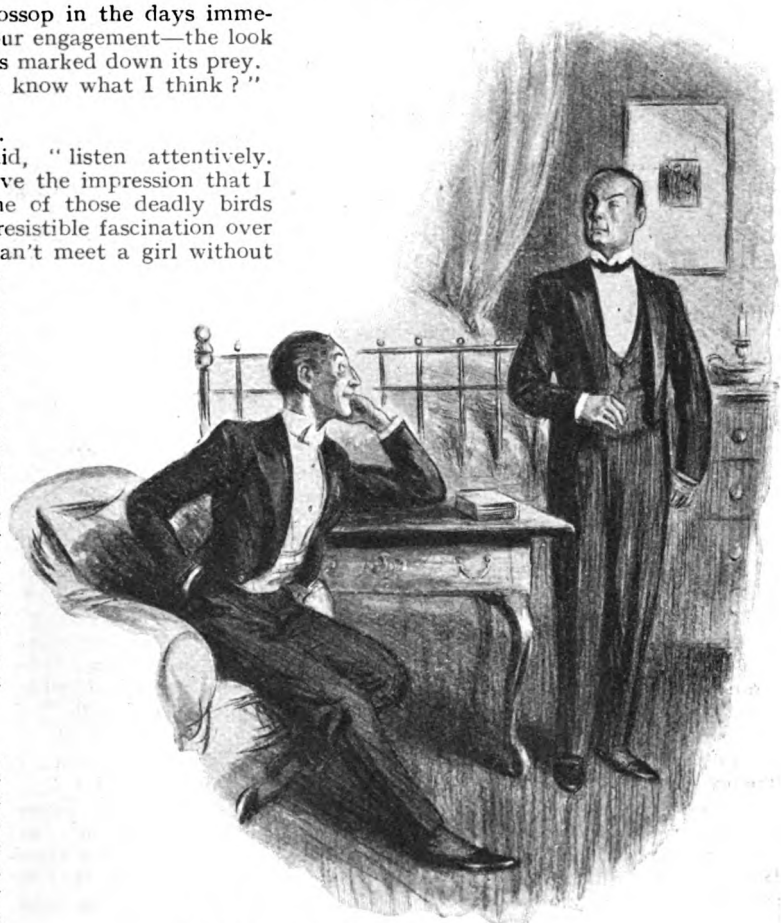
"Very true, sir."

"I mean to say, I know perfectly well that I've got, roughly speaking, half the amount of brain a normal bloke ought to possess. And when a girl comes along who has about twice the regular allowance she too often makes a bee-line for me with the love-light in her eyes. I don't know how to account for it, but it is so."

"It may be Nature's provision for maintaining the balance of the species, sir."

"Very possibly. Anyway, it has happened to me over and over again. It was what happened in the case of Honoria Glossop. She was notoriously one of the brainiest women of her year at Girton and she just gathered me in like a pull-pup swallowing a piece of steak."

"Miss Pringle, I am informed, sir, was an even more brilliant scholar than Miss Glossop."



"What's to be done, Jeeves?"
"We must think, sir."
"You think. I haven't the machinery."

"Well, there you are! Jeeves, she looks at me."

"Yes, sir?"

"I keep meeting her on the stairs and in passages."

"Indeed, sir?"

"She recommends me books to read, to improve my mind."

"Highly suggestive, sir."

"And at breakfast this morning, when I was eating a sausage, she told me I shouldn't, as modern medical science held that a four-inch sausage contained as many germs as a dead rat. The maternal touch, you understand. Fussing over my health."

"I think we may regard that, sir, as practically conclusive!"

I sank into a chair, thoroughly pipped.

"What's to be done, Jeeves?"

"We must think, sir."

"You think. I haven't the machinery."

"I will most certainly devote my very best attention to the matter, sir, and will endeavour to give satisfaction."

Well, that was something. But I was ill at ease. Yes, there is no getting away from it. Bertram was ill at ease.

NEXT morning we visited sixty-three more Cambridge colleges, and after lunch I said I was going to my room to lie down. After staying there for half an hour to give the coast time to clear, I shoved a book and smoking materials in my pocket and, climbing out of window, shinned down a convenient water-pipe into the garden. My objective was the summer-house, where it seemed to me that a man might put in a quiet hour or so without interruption.

It was extremely jolly in the garden. The sun was shining, the crocuses were all to the mustard, and there wasn't a sign of Heloise Pringle anywhere. The cat was fooling about on the lawn, so I chirruped to it and it gave a low gargle and came trotting up. I had just got it in my arms and was scratching it under the ear when there was a loud shriek from above, and there was Aunt Jane half out of a window. Dashed disturbing.

"Oh, right-ho," I said.

I dropped the cat, which galloped off into the bushes, and, dismissing the idea of bunging a brick at the aged relative, went on my way, heading for the shrubbery. Once safely hidden there, I worked round till I got to the summer-house.

And, believe me, I had hardly got my first cigarette nicely under way, when a shadow fell on my book and there was young Sticketh-Closer-Than-A-Brother in person.

"So there you are," she said.

She seated herself by my side, and with a sort of gruesome playfulness jerked the gasper out of the holder and heaved it out of the door.

"You're always smoking," she said, a lot too much like a lovingly chiding young bride for my comfort. "I wish you wouldn't. It's so bad for you. And you ought not to be sitting out here without your light overcoat. You want someone to look after you."

"I've got Jeeves."

She frowned a bit.

"I don't like him," she said.

"Eh? Why not?"

"I don't know. I wish you would get rid of him."

My flesh absolutely crept. And I'll tell you why. One of the first things Honoria Glossop had done after we had become engaged was to tell me she didn't like Jeeves and wanted him shot out. The realization that this girl resembled Honoria not only in body but blackness of soul made me go all faint.

"What are you reading?"

She picked up my book, and frowned again. The thing was one I had brought down from the old flat in London, to glance at in the train—a fairly zippy effort in the detective line called "The Trail of Blood." She turned the pages with a nasty sneer.

"I can't understand you liking nonsense of this——" she stopped suddenly. "Good gracious!"

"What's the matter?"

"Do you know Bertie Wooster?"

And then I saw that my name was scrawled right across the title-page, and my heart did three back-somersaults.

"Oh—er—well—that is to say—well, slightly."

"He must be a perfect horror. I'm surprised that you can make a friend of him. Apart from anything else, the man is practically an imbecile. He was engaged to my cousin Honoria at one time, and it was broken off because he was next door to insane. You should hear my Uncle Roderick talk about him."

I wasn't keen.

"Do you see much of him?"

"A goodish bit."

"I saw in the paper the other day that he was fined for making a disgraceful disturbance in the street."

"Yes, I saw that."

She gazed at me in a fond, motherly way.

"He can't be a good influence for you," she said. "I do wish you would drop him. Will you?"

"Well——" I began. And at this point old Cuthbert the cat, having presumably found it a bit slow by himself in the bushes, wandered in with a matey expression on his face and jumped on my lap.

I welcomed him with a good deal of cordiality. Though but a cat, he did make a sort of third at this party; and he afforded a good excuse for changing the conversation.

"Jolly birds, cats," I said.

She wasn't having any.

"Will you drop Bertie Wooster?" she said, absolutely ignoring the cat *motif*.

"It would be so difficult."

"Nonsense. It only needs a little will-power. The man surely can't be as interesting a companion as all that. Uncle Roderick says he is an invertebrate waster."

I could have mentioned a few things that I thought Uncle Roderick was, but my lips were sealed, so to speak.

"You have changed a great deal since we last met," said the Pringle disease re-

proachfully. She bent forward and began to scratch the cat under the other ear. "Do you remember, when we were children together, you used to say that you would do anything for me?"

"Did I?"

"I remember once you cried because I was cross and wouldn't let you kiss me."

I didn't believe it at the time, and I don't believe it now. Sippy is in many ways a good deal of a chump, but surely even at the age of ten he cannot have been such a priceless boob as that. I think the girl was lying, but that didn't make the position of affairs any better. I edged away a couple of inches, and sat staring before me, the old brow beginning to get slightly bedewed.

"Give me that cat!"

And then suddenly—well, you know how it is, I mean. I suppose everyone has had that ghastly feeling at one time or another of being urged by some overwhelming force to do some absolutely b ithering act. You get it every now and then when you're in a crowded theatre and something seems to be egging you on to shout "Fire!" and see what happens. Or you're talking to someone and all at once you feel "Now, suppose I suddenly biffed this bird in the eye!" Well, what I'm driving at is that at this juncture, with her shoulder squashing against mine and her back-hair tickling my nose, a perfectly loony impulse came sweeping over me to kiss her.

"No, really?" I croaked.

"Have you forgotten?"

She lifted the old onion and her eyes looked straight into mine. I could feel myself skidding. I shut my eyes. And then from the doorway there spoke the most beautiful voice I had ever heard in my life.

'Give me that cat!"

I opened my eyes. There was good old Aunt Jane, that queen among women, standing before me, glaring at me as if I were a vivisectionist and she had surprised me in the middle of an experiment. How this pearl among women had tracked me down I don't know, but there she stood, bless her dear, intelligent old soul, like the rescue-party in the last reel of a motion-picture.

I didn't wait. The spell was broken, and I legged it. As I went, I heard that lovely voice again.

"He shot arrows at my Tibby from a bow," said this most deserving and excellent octogenarian.

I didn't catch what Heloise said, if anything.

FOR the next few days all was peace. I saw comparatively little of Heloise. I found the strategic value of that water-pipe outside my window beyond praise. I seldom left the house now by any other route. It seemed to me that, if only the luck held like this, I might after all be able to stick this visit out for the full term of the sentence.

But meanwhile—as they say in the movies.

THE whole family appeared to be present and correct as I came down to the drawing-room a couple of nights later. The Prof., Mrs. Prof., the two Exhibits, and the girl Heloise were scattered about at intervals. The cat slept on the rug, the canary in its cage. There was nothing, in short, to indicate that this was not just one of our ordinary evenings.

"Well, well, well!" I said, cheerily. "Hullo-ullo-ullo!"

I always like to make something in the nature of an entrance speech, it seeming to me to lend a chummy tone to the proceedings.

The girl Heloise looked at me reproachfully.

"Where have you been all day?" she asked.

"I went to my room after lunch."

"You weren't there at five."

"No. After putting in a spell of work on the good old colleges, I went for a stroll. Fellow must have exercise if he means to keep fit."

"*Mens sana in corpore sano*," observed the Prof.

"I shouldn't wonder," I said cordially.

At this point, when everything was going as sweet as a nut and I was feeling on top of my form, Mrs. Pringle suddenly soaked me on the base of the skull with a sandbag.

Not actually, I don't mean. No, no. I speak figuratively, as it were.

"Roderick is very late," she said.

You may think it strange that the sound of that name should have sloshed into my nerve-centres like a half-brick. But, take it from me, to a man who has had any dealings with Sir Roderick Glossop there is only one Roderick in the world. And that is one too many.

"Roderick?" I gurgled.

"My brother-in-law, Sir Roderick Glossop, comes to Cambridge to-night," said the Prof. "He lectures at St. Luke's to-morrow. He is coming here to dinner."

And while I stood there, feeling like the hero when he discovers that he is trapped in the den of the Secret Nine, the door opened.

"Sir Roderick Glossop," announced the maid or some such person. And in he came.

One of the things that get this old crumb so generally disliked among the better element of the community is the fact that he has a head like the dome of St. Paul's and eyebrows that want bobbing or shingling to reduce them to anything like reasonable size. It is a nasty experience to see this bald and bushy bloke advancing on you when you haven't prepared the strategic railways in your rear. As he came into the room, I backed behind a sofa and commended my soul to God. I didn't need to have my hand read to know that trouble was coming to me through a dark man.

He didn't spot me at first. He shook hands with the Prof. and wife, kissed Heloise, and waggled his head at the Exhibits.

"I fear I am somewhat late," he said. "A slight accident on the road, affecting what my chauffeur termed the——"

And then he saw me lurking on the outskirts, and gave a startled grunt, as if I hurt him a good deal internally.

"This——" began the Prof., waving in my direction.

"I am already acquainted with Mr. Wooster."

"This," went on the Prof., "is Miss Sipperley's nephew Oliver. You remember Miss Sipperley?"

"What do you mean?" barked Sir Roderick. Having had so much to do with loonies has given him a rather sharp and authoritative manner on occasion. "This is that wretched young man, Bertram Wooster. What is all this nonsense about Olivers and Sipperleys?"

The Prof. was eyeing me with some natural surprise. So were the others. I beamed a bit weakly.

"Well, as a matter of fact——" I said.

The Prof. was wrestling with the situation. You could hear his brain buzzing.

"He said he was Oliver Sipperley," he moaned.

"Come here!" bellowed Sir Roderick. "Am I to understand that you have inflicted yourself on this household under the pretence of being the nephew of an old friend?"

It seemed a pretty accurate description of the facts.

"Well—er—yes," I said.

Sir Roderick shot an eye at me. It entered the body somewhere about the top stud, roamed around inside for a bit, and went out at the back.

"Insane! Quite insane, as I knew from the first moment I saw him."

"What did he say?" asked Aunt Jane.

"Roderick says this young man is insane," roared the Prof.

"Ah!" said Aunt Jane, nodding, "I thought as much. He climbs down waterpipes."

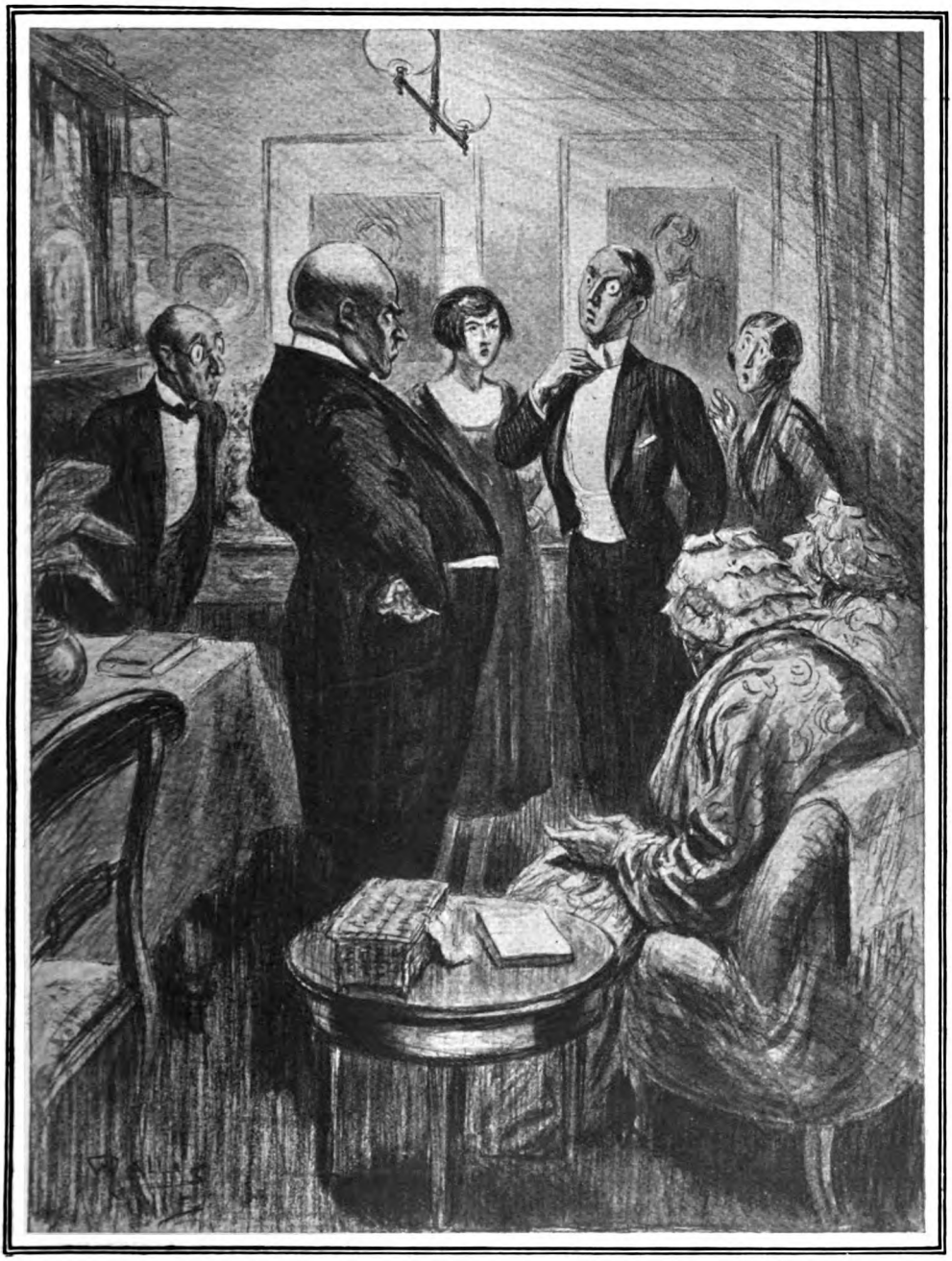
"Does what?"

"I've seen him. Ah, many a time."

Sir Roderick snorted violently.

"He ought to be under proper restraint. It is abominable that a person in his mental condition should be permitted to roam the world at large. The next stage may quite easily be homicidal."

It seemed to me that, even at the expense of giving old Sippy away, I must be cleared



Sir Roderick shot an eye at me. "Insane! Quite insane," he said, "as I knew from the first moment I saw him."

of this frightful charge. After all, Sippy's number was up, anyway.

"Let me explain," I said. "Sippy asked me to come here."

"What do you mean?"

"He couldn't come himself, because he was jugged for biffing a cop on Boat Race night."

Well, it wasn't easy to make them get the hang of the story, and even when I'd done it, it didn't seem to make them any chummier towards me. A certain coldness about expresses it, and when dinner was announced I counted myself out and pushed off rapidly to my room. I could have done with a bit of dinner, but the atmosphere didn't seem just right.

"Jeeves," I said, having shot in and pressed the bell, "we're sunk."

"Sir?"

"Hell's foundations are quivering and the game is up."

He listened attentively.

"The contingency was one always to have been anticipated as a possibility, sir. It only remains to take the obvious step."

"What's that?"

"Go and see Miss Sipperley, sir."

"What on earth for?"

"I think it would be judicious to apprise her of the facts yourself, sir, instead of allowing her to hear of them through the medium of a letter from Professor Pringle. That is to say, if you are still anxious to do all that is in your power to assist Mr. Sipperley."

"I can't let old Sippy down. If you think it's any good——"

"We can but try it, sir. I have an idea, sir, that we may find Miss Sipperley disposed to look leniently upon Mr. Sipperley's misdemeanour."

"What makes you think that?"

"It is just a feeling that I have, sir."

"Well, if you think it would be worth trying—— How do we get there?"

"The distance is about a hundred and fifty miles, sir. Our best plan would be to hire a car."

"Get it at once," I said.

The idea of being a hundred and fifty miles away from Heloise Pringle, not to mention Aunt Jane and Sir Roderick Glossop, sounded about as good to me as anything I had ever heard.

THE PADDOCK, Beckley-on-the-Moor, was about a couple of parasangs from the village, and I set out for it next morning, after partaking of a hearty breakfast at the local inn, practically without a tremor. I suppose when a fellow has been through it as I had in the last two weeks, his system becomes hardened. After all, I felt, whatever this aunt of Sippy's might be like, she wasn't Sir Roderick Glossop, so I was that much on velvet from the start.

The Paddock was one of those medium-sized houses with a goodish bit of very tidy garden and a carefully-rolled gravel drive curving past a shrubbery that looked as if it had just come back from the dry-cleaner —the sort of a house you take one look at and say to yourself, "Somebody's aunt lives there." I pushed on up the drive, and as I turned the bend I observed in the middle distance a woman messing about by a flower-bed with a trowel in her hand. If this wasn't the female I was after, I was very much mistaken, so I halted, cleared the throat, and gave tongue.

"Miss Sipperley?"

She had had her back to me, and at the sound of my voice she executed a sort of leap or bound, not unlike a bare-foot dancer who steps on a tin-tack half-way through the Vision of Salome. She came to earth and goggled at me in a rather goofy manner. A large, stout female with a reddish face.

"Hope I didn't startle you?" I said.

"Who are you?"

"My name's Wooster. I'm a pal of your nephew Oliver." Her breathing had become more regular.

"Oh?" she said. "When I heard your voice, I thought you were someone else."

"No, that's who I am. I came up here to tell you about Oliver."

"What about him?"

I hesitated. Now that we were approaching what you might call the nub or crux of the situation a good deal of my breezy confidence seemed to have slipped from me.

"Well, it's rather a painful tale, I must warn you."

"Oliver isn't ill? He hasn't had an accident?"

She spoke anxiously, and I was pleased at this evidence of human feeling. I decided to shoot the works with no more delay.

"Oh, no, he isn't ill," I said, "and, as regards having accidents, it depends what you call an accident. He's in chokey."

"In what?"

"In prison."

"In prison!"

"It was entirely my fault. We were strolling along on Boat Race night, and I advised him to pinch a policeman's helmet."

"I don't understand."

"Well, he seemed depressed, don't you know, and rightly or wrongly I thought it might cheer him up if he stepped across the street and collared a policeman's helmet. He thought it a good idea, too, so he started doing it, and the man made a fuss, and Oliver sloshed him."

"Sloshed him?"

"Biffed him. Smote him a blow. In the stomach."

"My nephew Oliver hit a policeman in the stomach?"

"Absolutely in the stomach. And next morning the beak sent him to the Bastille for thirty days without the option."

I was looking at her a bit anxiously all this while, to see how she was taking the thing, and at this moment her face seemed suddenly to split in half. For an instant she appeared to be all mouth, and then she was staggering about the grass, shouting with happy laughter and waving the trowel madly. It seemed to me a bit of luck for her that Sir Roderick Glossop wasn't on the spot. He would have been sitting on her head and calling for the strait-waistcoat in the first half-minute.

"You aren't annoyed?" I said.

"Annoyed?" She chuckled happily. "I've never heard such a splendid thing in my life."

I was pleased and relieved. I had hoped the news wouldn't upset her too much, but I had never expected it to go with such a roar as this.

"I'm proud of him," she said.

"That's fine."

"If every young man in England went about hitting policemen in the stomach, it would be a better country to live in."

I couldn't follow her reasoning, but everything seemed to be all right, so after a few more cheery words I said good-bye and legged it.

"JEEVES," I said, when I got back to the inn, "everything's fine. But I am far from understanding why."

"What actually occurred when you met Miss Sipperley, sir?"

"I told her Sippy was in the jug for assaulting the police. Upon which, she burst into hearty laughter, waved her trowel in a pleased manner, and said she was proud of him."

"I think I can explain her apparently eccentric behaviour, sir. I am informed that Miss Sipperley has had a good deal of annoyance at the hands of the local constable during the past two weeks. This has doubtless resulted in a prejudice on her part against the Force as a whole."

"Really? How was that?"

"The constable has been somewhat over-zealous in the performance of his duties, sir. On no fewer than three occasions in the last ten days he has served summonses upon Miss Sipperley—for exceeding the speed limit in her car; for allowing her dog to appear in public without a collar; and for failing to abate a smoky chimney. Being in the nature of an autocrat, if I may use the term, in the village, Miss Sipperley has been accustomed to do these things in the past with impunity, and the constable's unexpected zeal has made her somewhat ill-disposed to policemen as a class and, consequently, disposed to look upon such assaults as Mr. Sipperley's in a kindly and broad-minded spirit."

I saw his point.

"What an amazing bit of luck, Jeeves!"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you hear all this?"

"My informant was the constable himself, sir. He is my cousin."

I gaped at the man. I saw, so to speak, all.

"Good Lord, Jeeves! You didn't bribe him?"

"Oh, no, sir. But it was his birthday last week, and I gave him a little present. I have always been fond of Egbert."

"How much?"

"A matter of five pounds, sir."

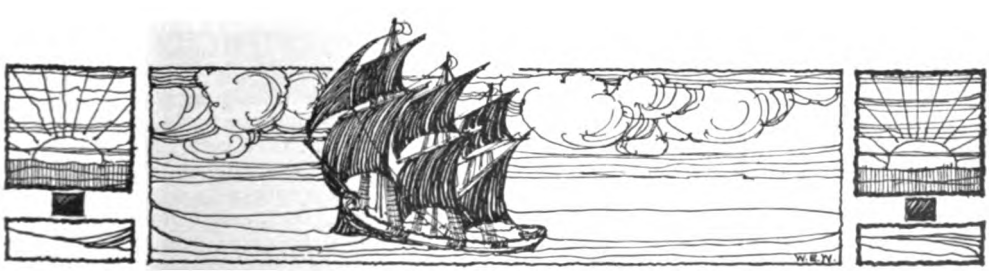
I felt in my pocket.

"Here you are," I said. "And another fiver for luck."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"Jeeves," I said, "you move in a mysterious way your wonders to perform. You don't mind if I sing a bit, do you?"

"Not at all, sir," said Jeeves.



My Portrait Gallery

BY

SIR LANDON RONALD

II.

NOTHING irritated or bored me more in the days of my youth than to return home in a great state of enthusiasm and excitement from some wonderful performance by Jean de Reszke, or Sarasate, or any great artiste of that period, and be told by my beloved old father, " Ah ! my boy, you should have heard X., or Y., or Z. *They* were great artistes ; these people of to-day are merely first-class amateurs in comparison." I had never heard X. or Y. or Z., and therefore it was of little interest to me to be *told* how wonderful they were, more especially when my very soul had gone out in gratitude to the great ones of *my* generation for the true enjoyment their gifts had given me. But I find that history repeats itself. Here am I, going to tell you something about the greatest baritone of which England has ever been able to boast, and probably many of the younger readers of this Magazine will shrug their shoulders impatiently and say, " Oh, well, he may have been all you say he was, but John Jones is good enough for me to go along with." And yet thirty or forty years hence these very same young people will probably tell their juvenile friends, " Ah ! you should have heard Kreisler, or Paderewski, or Caruso," as the case may be. And so the world goes on, and so it is that I propose to tell you a few personal memories of Sir Charles Santley—or, as I and my wife called him for years, " The Pater "—an English baritone singer of world-wide fame.

As a young man I had often accompanied him at concerts, and wrote a song for him called " Daphne's Love " (very much in the style of " To Anthea "), which he sang, and which accordingly had a certain amount of success. But it was not until he was about sixty-eight years of age that we became really great friends. It was just about this time that sundry rumours were circulated in the profession that I knew how to conduct an orchestra ; and although the critics and the public were perfectly indifferent to the fact, Santley was not. He was mightily pleased with my efforts, and told me again and again that conducting was my *forte*, and insisted that I should devote myself to it entirely. Looking back after many years, I certainly think his advice was somewhat remarkable, emanating as it did from a singer. Great singers as a rule are not great musicians, and their opinions and criticisms on musical subjects, *outside singing*, have but little worth and should not carry weight. Santley was no exception to the rule. Great artiste-singer as he was, I never attached the slightest importance to any criticism or opinion of his about composers or instrumentalists. He only judged conductors by the way they accompanied him, and this is probably the reason of his enthusiasm for my humble efforts at that time. My experience of playing for him at the piano stood me in good stead when I took the baton in my hand, with the result that his enthusiasm for my work increased bit by bit, ending in his insisting on my conducting his farewell concert, to which I shall refer later.

Santley had a breezy personality and was a very blunt man. Those who expected flattery or false compliments from him were doomed to disappointment. He said what he meant, and meant what he said. He had very pronounced and definite opinions about his art which he never failed to express. He had no use for faddists, and he would rave and storm against the advertising voice-producing merchant who undertook to make any and every one sing beautifully. " Quacks and humbugs," he cried, " that's what they are. They ought to be prosecuted for taking money under false pretences—though the fools who pay them deserve all that they get." He was a strict Catholic, gave away much of his earnings, and was an exceptionally liberal host. His house was a very modest one in St. John's Wood, but if he asked you to dinner you sat down to as fine a meal as you could get anywhere. In addition, a hired landau was always placed at your disposal for the evening ! (This was before the days of motoring.)

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I asked him one day why he did this, and his answer was typical of the man. "My evening's entertainment," said he, "has often been spoilt by my anxiety as to whether I should arrive too early or too late at my host's house, and above all how I was going to get back if it was a wet night. It occurred to me that, on the rare occasions I did entertain, my guests should at least come and return in as comfortable a manner as my means would allow, and therefore, if they had no vehicle of their own, I ventured to place one at their disposal!" A few weeks later it was arranged for him to dine with us, and we were naturally anxious to return the compliment of sending a landau to fetch him. He was furious. "Do you take me for a *prima donna*," he wrote, "or a sweet young lady like your wife? No, Lan, my boy, the day your old 'Pater' can't use the good legs God gave him, or obtain a comfortable four-wheeler to carry him, he will cease to accept invitations to dine with his dear boy and his best half, who is worth walking miles to see! (The wife—not you!!)" Trivial as this incident may appear to some, it may serve to shed a light on one side of his character.

Sir Charles Santley.

And now in conclusion I want to refer to the wonderful farewell concert that was arranged for him by the late Lord Kilmorey and myself at the Albert Hall—the scene of so many of his former triumphs. Many great artistes who had been associated with him during his long and honoured career eagerly offered their services, and either King Edward and Queen Alexandra or the present King and Queen (who were then Prince and Princess of Wales) were present. My memory fails me on this point, but I am certain that either one or the other of the Royal couples attended the concert. One incident stands out in my memory and is worth recounting. At rehearsal I had arranged with my orchestra that they should all stand up immediately the great singer appeared on the platform at the concert, thus showing him a special mark of respect. This they did, but to my amazement the whole of the vast audience followed suit, cheering and clapping to their hearts' content! This had a most astounding effect on the old man, who was already in an extremely nervous state and shaking like an aspen leaf. He suddenly began to murmur the most awful string of oaths I have ever heard come from the lips of man! As I have said, Santley was a strict Catholic, and I had never heard him say anything stronger than a "damn" in my life. So you can imagine my feelings when I heard this sort of thing going on under his breath: "Sit down, you —— fools; stop that —— noise, —— you; start the —— orchestra, Lan; don't stand there like a —— fool," etc., etc. It was a moment I shall never forget. I am perfectly certain, however, that he never realized what he was saying or doing either at the time or afterwards, and needless to say I never told him about it.

THE name of Marie Tempest will undoubtedly go down to posterity if only for the reason that she was the first person who ever succeeded in making me dance! I mean this literally—not metaphorically. *She made me dance!* It occurred a few months ago at a delightful party given by Lady Wyndham. Marie Tempest spied me playing the *rôle* of a wallflower with conspicuous success, bore down upon me, placed her arms round my unwilling neck, and, notwithstanding all my expostulations, made me walk round the room with her, much to the amusement of all the onlookers. "There," she said, in that fascinating way of hers, "you did it perfectly splendidly,

and, mind, you are never to refuse me again." It was the most self-conscious moment of my life, and I felt very inclined to emulate Santley's example and murmur a string of oaths. I once read a book entitled "Twinkletoes." Well, I can't help thinking that "Twinkle-*eyes*" would be an appropriate name for Marie Tempest. There is a sense of fun and devilry in her every look. I have never seen such laughing eyes in any other woman. I cannot describe her better to you than by saying that she is just the same off the stage as she is on. Her great art to my mind is that she is so wonderfully natural. One never feels in watching her that that particular pose has been thought out, or that that big scene has taken weeks of study. It probably has—indeed, I may say it certainly has—but as her friends have seen her pose and heard her talk in exactly the same way in her own drawing-room they never feel that she is actually acting. It is the old question of art concealing art. One thing is quite certain: Marie Tempest has learnt the secret of perpetual youth. When she deserted the comic-opera stage for what is termed, I believe, "the legitimate stage," she appeared in a version of "Nell Gwynne" for which Edward German wrote music that has since become very popular. She engaged me to conduct. It doesn't matter how many years ago this was; it was certainly well before the war. The whole point is that it is practically impossible to discern any difference between the Nell Gwynne of those days and the Marie Tempest who dragged me round Lady Wyndham's ballroom a few months ago. The same *petite* figure, the same twinkling eyes, the same fascinating voice and mannerisms, and, above all, the same great big heart as of yore.

Miss Marie Tempest.

FOR me to attempt to tell you something about a king may be considered presumptuous by some and plucky by others. As a matter of fact, it is neither. I set out to give you a few pen-sketches of people I have known and whose portraits I possess, and as I had the honour of meeting King Edward both as Prince of Wales and as King on innumerable occasions, I feel that no apology is needed for setting down some of the impressions I still retain of his very gracious Majesty. It is well known that King Edward never autographed his portrait for anyone but his personal friends. I was unaware of this fact when I boldly asked the late Lord Farquhar (who was then Master of the Household) if I might have a signed photograph of His Majesty. This occurred after my having accompanied at one of the many concerts that were given in those days at Buckingham Palace, and Lord Farquhar (who had already sent me many royal pins and cuff links as presents from their Majesties) asked me if I would care to have a cigarette-case as a souvenir instead of the usual pin. I at once begged for a portrait, but Lord Farquhar gave me but little hope of getting one, for the reason I have stated. I reminded him that I had been accompanying at royal concerts for exactly ten years, and he seemed to think that that might be a helpful factor, and asked me to leave it to him to see what he could do. A fortnight later the magnificent portrait reproduced on the opposite page arrived at my house in a lovely frame and duly autographed. The pleasure this gracious action gave me can be better imagined than described.

It was down at the late Marquess and Marchioness of Ripon's beautiful house at Coombe that I had the honour of often meeting King Edward and Queen Alexandra.

These were *intime* parties, but unforgettable. Lady Ripon always provided wonderful music for Queen Alexandra—Melba and Caruso, Mischa Elman, Plançon, Scotti, and other equally famous artistes—and the King, after listening awhile, would quietly retire and play a rubber of bridge with the old Duchess of Devonshire and de Soveral, the Portuguese Minister. Then there were much smaller parties given, when only about eight or ten people would be invited to meet their Majesties, and I was asked alone just to play any and every thing Queen Alexandra cared to hear, and perhaps accompany some young and talented singer or instrumentalist I had asked to be allowed to bring. King Edward was in no sense a connoisseur of music, nor, in my opinion, did he like it very much. He had a few outstanding favourites. "La Bohème," "Rigoletto," "Faust," and "Romeo and Juliette" were operas he enjoyed, and he always loved Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory" and Tosti's songs. I think he was very keen on a good march. I remember being greatly amused one night, after I had accompanied someone in the aria from "Rigoletto" called "Caro Nome," when he approached the piano and said to me, "What a capital march that would make! Why don't you arrange it for a military band?" One doesn't argue with one's king, so I bowed and promised to see if I could do it. I never did, however!

King Edward VII.

King Edward had a strong personality, infinite charm of manner, and a delightful smile. He was very dignified, and on State occasions looked every inch a king. His amiability was exceptional, and he had the gift of placing you at your ease; but I always felt that this amiability had its definite limitations, and Heaven help the man who got too pleased with himself and forgot that he was conversing with his King! I have seen that man snubbed in a truly royal manner. I remember an embarrassing incident occurring at the house of an American millionaire. King Edward—then Prince of Wales—had consented to be present at a great concert the American had arranged at his house. The Prince duly arrived, and sat through the concert attended by his host, who never budged from his royal guest's side for one instant, and who seemed to try to prevent anyone else approaching. At the end of the concert the Prince rose and made a move to speak to some of his friends. But he reckoned without his host. This gentleman placed himself at once right in front of the Prince, dividing the crowded room by opening and shutting his arms, and shouting at the top of his voice, "Make room for the royal Prince, please! The royal Prince is coming! Clear the way for the royal Prince!" I can still see the look of extreme anger and embarrassment on the Prince's face and the agonized expression of his equerry, whose heroic efforts to stop the American from making such a fool of himself proved entirely futile. I know not what occurred afterwards, but I was told a few days later that the Prince did not stay to supper as was arranged, but asked for his carriage immediately.

Any fulsome words of praise for King Edward on my part would be but sheer impertinence; but I think I dare venture the opinion that, when his death was announced, every person in England, Scotland, Wales, and the Dominions felt that they had

Madame Suggia.

would surely be the first to admit that the expression he has portrayed is only one of a hundred others equally attractive, and only to be caught when she plays or when she talks. In these little sketches I have purposely refrained from expressing any opinion about an artiste's musical prowess. It has been my object rather to try and convey to you the personality as distinct from the artiste. Therefore, beyond stating that Suggia is one of the greatest 'cellists of this generation—a fact well known to you all—I have no intention of dilating upon her musical prowess. She is a fascinating creature in the drawing-room—full of vivacity, very amusing, and ever ready to enter into a joke. I find in her an utter lack of jealousy and a generous appreciation of her fellow-artistes. She is one of the few women in the world who can look graceful when she plays the 'cello. It always seems to me as if she were part of the instrument. I am sure that Nature never intended her to play any other. Hollman, a well-known 'cellist of his day, used to refer to his instrument as "My wife"; Suggia could well call hers "My better half"!

AND now a few words about a "hated rival conductor"—Sir Henry J. Wood! As a matter of fact, I don't suppose there are two greater friends in the profession than Henry Wood and myself. It has come to my knowledge again and again that sustained a very personal loss. He was justly named "The Peacemaker"; it would have been equally true to have called him "Edward the Beloved."

AND here is a portrait of wonderful Suggia—with her ever-changing countenance, her expressive brow, and her sensitive mouth. Augustus John has made her immortal by painting a masterpiece of her, but even he

Sir Henry J. Wood.

he is always saying enthusiastic things about my work behind my back, and I yield to none in my whole-hearted admiration for his genius. So that disposes for once and always of the "hated rival" theory! Wood is excellent company—very alive, brilliantly intelligent, and most amusing. There may be some professional musicians who work as hard as Henry Wood (not *harder*, be it noted), but I am perfectly certain there is no one who works with such method. Every minute in the day means something to him. I have seen him eat his lunch at a restaurant with a clock on the table! His gift for arranging the length of a rehearsal to the half-minute is uncanny. And Heaven help the artiste—young or old—who should fail to attend at the appointed hour! His power of endurance is unbelievable. I have known him rehearse from ten till one in the morning, conduct an afternoon concert, followed by an evening concert! And he always gives of his best, never sparing himself for one moment. He has often told me that he prefers teaching to conducting, but it is hard to believe. He is exceptionally thorough and conscientious and he leaves nothing to chance. Every little detail is thought out and worked out with meticulous care. I know of no one in the world who can train an orchestra as well as Henry Wood. None of us can ever turn a bad player into a good one, but Wood will make a bad player play better than he has ever done in his life! In his hours of leisure he devotes himself to painting, an art for which he has great gifts. This and architecture I believe to be his chief hobbies. I have stated that he makes an excellent companion; I should have added that he is a splendid friend. A brilliant career and a life of continuous success have left him entirely unspoilt.

Benno Moiseiwitsch.

IN a previous article I described Mark Hambourg as being always *forte*; his antithesis is Benno Moiseiwitsch, who may be said to be always *piano*. I know no quieter or more subdued personality in the profession. His expression is quite sphinx-like, and, excepting for a rare smile or a glint in the eyes, it tells you but little of what is actually passing in his mind. Moiseiwitsch away from his music is a born sportsman. He loves playing cards, horse-racing, billiards, motoring, and he will never miss a boxing match if he can help it. He has a merry sense of humour and various other qualities and virtues which endear him to his men friends. I have rarely or never seen him excited. He will win or lose money without the smallest sign of pleasure or resentment. The cheers and applause of a vast audience leave him untouched. The quiet little bow and the sphinx-like expression you have all seen on the platform are characteristic of him in the drawing-room. Probably, if a vote from the members of his club could be taken, he would easily come out on top as the most popular member. All Englishmen love a good sportsman, and that Benno Moiseiwitsch undoubtedly is.

The Greatest Love-Charm in the World

LITTLE Miss Timmins looked at the Italian and looked at the little jade disk. She liked the disk, but she did not like the Italian. He was not a nicely-rounded and greasy and smiling Italian, but small and jagged. His nose stuck out, his brows stuck out, his chin, his cheek-bones, and his ears stuck out, all very jaggedly; and his small, black, shifty eyes were much too close together.

But she did like the disk, and though she had never seen it, or one like it, before, she knew it. She had heard of it. It was of a faintly sea-green jade, rather more than two inches in diameter, with a movable centre, and it was carved, partly *à jour*, partly in low relief, with the symbols—a powerful love-charm; indeed, properly treated, the greatest love-charm in the world.

Miss Timmins wanted it; she wanted it badly—not that she appeared to have any need of a love-charm, for her eyes were very blue, her skin clear to translucency, her colouring delightful, her hair of the most silken and full of golden light, her figure

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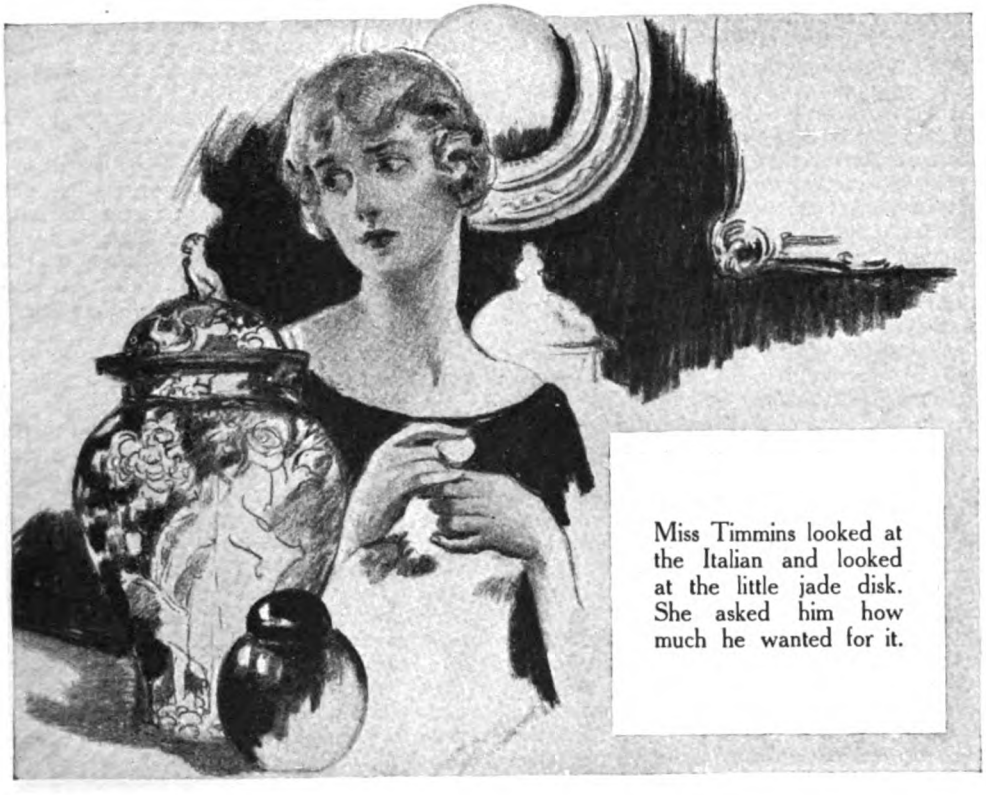

Miss Timmins looked at the Italian and looked at the little jade disk. She asked him how much he wanted for it.

By

EDGAR JEPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

admirable. No: she did not need any love-charm, but that did not prevent her from greedily craving for this one. In matters of prime importance one cannot make too sure. With that disk hanging round her neck—out of sight, of course—she would feel more comfortable. Not that she attached the slightest importance to love; she was not so silly; she was much too busy making a living out of her father's antique shop to bother about things of that kind.

But was it safe to buy the disk from such a jagged Italian? How had he come by it? He certainly looked as if he were in the habit of acquiring by theft any property he did acquire. But perhaps his looks belied him—he might have a heart of rolled gold. She hesitated. Then she questioned him about the disk in accents a trifle imperious, proper in one of Nordic race speaking to one obviously Mediterranean.

In a sharp, harsh voice he mumbled the tale. The disk belonged to his girl, the girl who was betrothed to him. It had been given to her by a friend. Being hard up, she had asked him to sell it for her.

The story was plausible, but it did not impress Miss Timmins. Had it been a matter of an ordinary jade pendant, she would have had nothing to do with it. But a love-charm—a love-charm was different. It seemed natural that it should come to one not in the ordinary way.

She asked him how much he wanted for it. He shrugged his shoulders; he displayed the palms of his hands; his black eyes shone; he mumbled volubly about the rarity and expensiveness of the piece; he

said that he wanted a pound for it. Miss Timmins's suspicions were confirmed : either the Italian or his lady-love had come by the charm informally.

She said in accents of the coldest severity : " I'll give you fifteen shillings for it."

She felt that there must be no pampering the transgressor.

She expected a protest, a storm of wild and whirling protests, with lashings of gesture and facial contortion. Nothing of the kind came. The Italian held out a dirty, claw-like hand ; a chasm, set with black and pointed rocks, opened wide in the lower part of his face, and there rang out, loud and clear and fearless, the slogan of his race :—

" Giva da mon ! "

Regretting that she had not offered him seven-and-sixpence, Miss Timmins paid him ; and he left the shop with a stealthy swiftness.

THE love-charm had, to all seeming, been scented carefully with garlic. Miss Timmins washed it till it smelt of garlic no more, and began to polish it with a wash-leather. She had brought it to a superfine lustre, and was looking at it lovingly, when Lord Scredington came suddenly and quietly through the door of the shop. She saw him ; her hand dropped sharply below the level of the counter, but not sharply enough to prevent his very blue eyes from grasping the fact that Miss Timmins was hiding something from him—probably an object of art of unusual merit. This was not the kind of thing that he could allow, much less encourage. He felt this strongly.

He said : " Good morning, Beulah darling. What have you got there ? "

It was a mistake to begin by giving little Miss Timmins some of what she was wont to describe as his cheek. She refused flatly to show him the disk.

He expostulated and entreated and dwelt at length on the folly of allowing one's temper to interfere with one's business ; he warned her that she was not only taking the risk of failing to make an uncommonly advantageous sale, but also of estranging for ever her best customer. She began by being lofty with him—the proper attitude to assume after his cheek. Then, as his persistence became almost badgering, she grew curt and even harsh. Slowly he grew gloomier and gloomier till, as she phrased it to herself, his face was like a funeral. Though she often had grave doubts of his sincerity, she could never quite believe that he was shamming ; and the faintest frown of distressed bewilderment furrowed her brow. On the instant he uttered a threat he had found effective before. He said :—

" If you don't show me that thing, whatever it is, I shall cry like a child."

It was too much. In a sudden access of exasperation Miss Timmins said with a harsh callousness : " Cry ! "

Lord Scredington howled like a dog, and a good loud dog, too.

Miss Timmins gasped. She heard her father spring from his chair in the parlour behind the shop and his spectacles jingle on the floor. That mattered little ; but the howl, protracted, was carrying well into the street and down it. What would the neighbours say ? Whatever *would* the neighbours say ?

" You're the most aggravating—— " she was about to say " beast," but amended it to—" idiot I ever came across ! " she snarled, and produced the greatest love-charm in the world.

She did not hand it to him, but held it out for him to see, well out of his reach. He saw it well enough ; his sight was uncommonly good. He whistled softly, and his eyes grew immensely covetous.

" No wonder you didn't want me to see it," he said, softly. " I'll take it."

" You won't ! " said Miss Timmins. " I want it myself."

Mr. Timmins appeared at the back door of the shop and peered at them. He had found his spectacles. When his eyes fell on Lord Scredington, he smiled.

" I thought it was a dog," he said, and went back to read about the travels of the lost tribes of Israel, his favourite subject.

" I'll give you—I'll give you ten times what you gave for it," said Lord Scredington.

" You won't," said Miss Timmins, in a tone of finality.

" If you are going to be harsh about it, I shall cry again," he said, in a threatening tone.

" You can howl the house down, but you won't get this disk," said Miss Timmins again, in a tone of finality.

Perusing her face, Lord Scredington considered whether he should howl the house down or not. Her face assured him that he would indeed gain nothing by howling the house down.

Changing his tone, he said in imploring accents : " Then give it me, Beulah darling. You know what a powerful charm it is, and how I have adored you for months and months. If you give it me I shall love you for ever and ever. You know I shall."

" I will not," she said.

" But I want it so badly," he pleaded.

" You always want the things I want," she said, with indignant warmth. " Why can't you want the things I don't want ? Then you could have them."

" Of course I want the things you want.

We have the same exquisite taste and we're immensely sympathetic. That's what makes me adore you so passionately. You know that's what it is. Do give me this charm."

"I won't," said Miss Timmins, violently, after a pause in which she nearly did give it to him.

"Nasty little—angel!" he said, bitterly; then he added: "Well, let me look at it. I'll give it back to you."

He examined it carefully with rather hungry eyes; then he said, sadly: "Yes: you always want the same things that I want. But you get them. I don't. Remember that lapis lazuli cloak-hook?"

"I like that!" said Miss Timmins, indignantly. "Why, you've got everything! All the money you want—and a title—and—and——"

"Beauty—go on—say it," he suggested.

Miss Timmins did not say it. Letting that matter drop, he began to discuss the beauty and quality of the jade charm.

Then he said: "Of course, it's quite harmless as it is. But you could make yourself loved to distraction by some unfortunate man, if you knew what to do with it. Fortunately you don't."

"Oh, don't——" Miss Timmins began, and stopped short.

His eyes opened wide in an astonished stare; and he said: "Why, you do! Oh, you wicked, wicked girl!"

Miss Timmins blushed and went on blushing—furious with herself. He laughed and went on laughing: a connection between so fragile and charming a creature as Miss Timmins and black magic seemed to him supremely laughable. She could have felled him to the earth with a sickening thud.

Of a sudden he became grave again and said: "Hasn't it occurred to you yet that you could make a great deal of money out of this charm?"

To Miss Timmins he appeared to be now talking. Methods of making money were of the greatest interest to her; and she asked him how.

At once he assumed a mercenary air and said: "How many kisses will you give me to tell you?"

"None!" said Miss Timmins, definitely.

"Did I know it? I did," he said, bitterly. "Never in all my life have I come across anyone so generous—I don't think. Everything for nothing and a little bit more seems to be your motto, you little horror! But hasn't it occurred to you that you could hire this charm out—for a tenner a month, or so? I must know at least a dozen bright, blithe, idiot women who would cheerfully pay a tenner a month for the use of the greatest love-charm in the world."

"But I want it for myself," said Miss Timmins.

"Do you want to use it at once?"

"No," she said, quickly.

"Well, why not make some money out of it in the meantime?" he asked.

"I don't want it spoilt," she said.

"But it won't be spoilt. None of these women will know how to make it really work, so that there's no fear of its losing any of its virtue."

"But that wouldn't be fair to them. I should be taking their money for nothing," she protested.

"You wouldn't. The mere possession of a really authentic and powerful love-charm like this will give any woman just the extra amount of confidence she needs to get her way with any man."

She felt bound to protest against this theory. But he persuaded her that it was so, that the possession of the disk would fill any woman with an irresistible faith that would remove mountainous obstacles for her. Yet the disk would come back with its powers intact. In the end she agreed to lend it for ten pounds a month to any superstitious lady who came to hire it.

"Of course, you'll have to be careful of them, or they'll have it off you," he said.

"Oh, yes: I know them," said Miss Timmins.

Presently he bade her good morning and went away, saying that he was going out into the world to act as her Press agent. Reluctantly Miss Timmins admitted to herself that he was really a very good sort and helpful, in spite of his cheek. Then she breathed the faintest sigh. Then she wrapped the greatest love-charm in the world in a small square of orange silk and put it in a little deeply-carved tortoiseshell incense-box.

LORD SCREDINGTON indeed went out into the world. As a rule he was only to be found in the drawing-rooms of great ladies in the afternoons on those rare occasions when the pursuit of evanescent beauty brought him into them. But that afternoon he saw to it that at least forty great ladies of lovable, or, at any rate, loving, age became aware that in the curiosity shop of a man named Timmins in Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, there was the greatest love-charm in the world.

He first informed a party of them of this fact at 4.30 p.m. None of them showed any great interest in his discovery. But at 4.50 p.m. there came into the shop in Devonshire Street, with a shrinking, even stealthy, air, one of the prettiest ladies Miss Timmins had ever set eyes on. She had a rather long face of a warm pallor, set

in a frame of really brown hair—worn, in defiance of the mode, rather low—the softest brown eyes, and most sensitive lips. She looked shyer than a fawn. Miss Timmins could not remember ever having been in all her life so attracted by anyone at first sight. And the exquisite way she was dressed! Everything she wore must have been specially woven and dyed for her, to match the brown of her eyes and hair.

She seemed to find the appearance of Miss Timmins reassuring, for she smiled at her and came straight to the point. "I'm told that you have a jade charm," she said. "I should like to see it."

"I've several jade charms," said Miss Timmins.

"The one I want to see is said to be the greatest love-charm in the world," said the lady, twisting her hands with an embarrassed air.

"Oh, you want to see that?" said Miss Timmins, hesitating. "You know that it's not for sale?"

The lady's face fell and she said in a lamentable tone: "No, I didn't."

"But you can hire it," said Miss Timmins. "You can hire it for as long as you like—till it works."

The lady heaved a sigh of relief. Miss Timmins took the little tortoiseshell incense-box from the cabinet and handed the disk to her.

"Oh, what a pretty thing!" she cried, feeling it and stroking it with the tips of the slenderest long fingers Miss Timmins had ever seen.

The arrangements for the hiring took no

time. The lady, Lady Kenilworth, agreed to pay ten guineas a month for the loan of the charm, and to return it as soon as it worked. Then she asked Miss Timmins how it would be best to wear it.

"I should wear it as a pendant, but out of sight," said Miss Timmins.

"I will," said Lady Kenilworth; then she hesitated, and added: "And you're sure that it really is powerful?"

"Certain," said Miss Timmins, with conviction. "It's the most powerful love-charm in the world."

Lady Kenilworth went away smiling, with a faint flush of excitement on her cheeks. Miss Timmins had no scruples about taking ten guineas a month for the use of the charm, for she could see quite clearly that that hirer at any rate would get her money's worth out of the mere possession of it. Indeed, any woman would. She hoped that Lady Kenilworth would get the man she wanted, though, whoever he might be, he would not deserve her. Then she put the notes away.

Lord Scredington saw to it that at least forty great ladies of lovable, or, at any rate, loving, age became aware that in the curiosity shop in Devonshire Street there was the greatest love-charm in the world.

Five minutes later another large motor-car stopped in front of the shop, and a really resplendent lady, stout, black-eyed, and imperious, came with a regal gait into it. She wore the air of one to whom Miss Timmins, the shop, Devonshire Street, and Theobald's Road belonged. Little Miss Timmins found that air unpleasing.

The imperious lady looked at Miss Timmins as if she were less than the dust before her chariot wheels, and said in harsh

and haughty accents: "I've come to look at a jade love-charm you've got."

Miss Timmins said that she had several jade charms; which did the lady want?

The lady hesitated; then she made up her mind that a common little person like Miss Timmins—she herself had been a nursery governess before she advanced to the peerage *viâ* the revue chorus—could not know anything about the charm. She said: "I'd better see them."

Miss Timmins produced three milky jade pendants: a gourd and vine, which is the emblem of the celibacy of the Buddhist priests; a tortoise, which is the emblem of solidity and strength; and the peaches of Seiobo, which help you to live for ever. The haughty lady studied them and appeared puzzled.

She appealed to Miss Timmins; she said: "Are these silly things what they call love-charms?"

"They might be," said Miss Timmins, cautiously; then she added, cheerfully: "And again they might not."

She would not allow this resplendent lady to pick her brains.

Thrown upon her own resources, the resplendent lady studied the pendants again. The peaches of Seiobo looked to her most like a love-charm. But how could she be sure? It was better—yes: it was certainly better to be on the safe side. She could find out from Lord Scredington later which of the three was the greatest love-charm in the world. She bought all three of them for five guineas apiece, and came out of the shop irresistibly equipped to be solid, celibate, and a centenarian.

Before Miss Timmins shut the shop that evening nine more ladies came in large motor-cars to buy the greatest love-charm in the world. She entered their names in order on a waiting list. She observed that all of them wore wedding rings. She quite understood that they were either widows and free, or wives eager to restore the fading affections of their husbands to their original brilliance—at least she felt bound to do so. She was able therefore to sell to them the small object of art which each bought to win her favour and retain her position on the waiting list, for fifty per cent. more than the usual price, with a wholly clear conscience.

JUST as she was shutting up the shop Lord Scredington arrived to learn whether his spreading the good tidings of the charm had been fruitful. With sparkling eyes, standing incautiously in the middle of the shop without a counter between them, she told him that she had leased the love-charm for a tenner a month and sold nearly fifty pounds' worth of objects of art besides. In a natural immense satisfaction at her good fortune, he kissed her quickly three times before she could tear herself loose. However, taking one thing with another, especially the fact that she had sold nearly fifty pounds' worth of goods, she did not reproach him with an extravagant bitterness. She should have kept the counter between them, or, better still, had a grating fixed in the door of the shop through which to speak to him.

When he heard that Lady Kenilworth had hired the love-charm he appeared intrigued, and spoke of the depth of still waters, and the distance fair and softly goes in a day, and the subtilty of widows. Evidently her action had awakened memories of his nurse's knee. He went on to say that he would keep an eye on the young woman and lose no time about it, since it was plain from her haste to secure the charm that she proposed to get to work at once.

This was the Tuesday evening. On the Thursday evening he came to report. He came gleeful.

"It worked," he said, in almost triumphant accents. "And I saw it do it. I was at Lady Granton's early and I saw Lady Kenilworth come in. She came in looking rather superb, with a kind of sparkle and brilliance as if the earth really did belong to her, don't you know. I've never seen her like that before, nor has anyone else—she was always very much on the shy side. It was the love-charm that had done it. I hoped that she was wearing it for me; but she wasn't, worse luck! Harmiston was the man; and I never dreamed it—neither did anyone else. He's one of those quiet chaps who never seem to have anything to say for themselves unless you get them alone; and then they're very good company indeed. He collects Rembrandts—pictures and drawings and etchings."

"Very expensive," said Miss Timmins, impressed.

"He can afford it," said Lord Scredington. "Well, he came in with Lady Brauncewell. She's rather taken charge of Harmiston—a short, dark, bright, noisy woman with a hooked nose and lots of teeth—you know the kind—always being animated."

Miss Timmins had a rough idea of the kind and she nodded.

"Well, she bounced in and Harmiston came a little way behind her—he always seems a little way behind her. I saw them come in and turned my attention to Lady Kenilworth again, and saw that she was looking at Harmiston and blushing a little, and she seemed to shine just a little more. He shook hands with Lady Granton and looked round the room and saw Lady Kenil-

worth looking at him. And then, suddenly, he looked as if he were looking at somebody quite new—rather funny—and then he went straight across the room to her as if he were in a bit of a hurry. And as he came she made a little dab at the middle of her chest—where the charm was. And when Harmiston shook hands with her, I noticed that they were looking at one another rather queerly; and he said something about her looking like a fairy princess who had just wakened. That was how she struck him, though really, you know, he'd just wakened himself. And I moved on, for I didn't suppose she would want anyone to notice what she said to him. But she was beautifully flushed, and her eyes were shining."

"That was nice of you," said Miss Timmins, in rather surprised accents.

"You'd have cleared out yourself—one had to," he said.

"And what happened then?"

"I saw them dancing together for about an hour. And later I heard Lady Brauncewell clamouring for him to take her on to Lady Bettington's. But they had gone, and they didn't turn up at Lady Bettington's, neither Lady Kenilworth nor Harmiston. I expect they forgot most things. I expect they motored into the country to see the moon. And after all it's very easy to forget a lot of teeth under a hooked nose, you know."

Miss Timmins laughed softly and said: "I'm glad. I thought Lady Kenilworth was very nice." Then she added, in impressed accents: "It's wonderful what a charm can do, if you get the real thing."

"I wonder," he said, doubtfully. "I fancy that what the charm really did was to give Lady Kenilworth confidence to—to get herself across. I tell you what: they ought to ask you to their wedding. You certainly made her auto-suggest herself into looking four times as beautiful as ever Harmiston or I had seen her."

"It's all very well, that auto-suggestion. But it might just be that the charm worked," said Miss Timmins.

They discussed these mysteries for a while: then he went. Always Miss Timmins saw him go with the odd feeling that he went right out of her world and might never come back.

The haughty lady studied them and appeared puzzled. "Are these silly things what they call love-charms?"

But he came again two mornings later and greeted her in a wholly decorous fashion, or, as she would have phrased it, without giving her any of his cheek, and made a request.

"Look here," he said. "I want you to let me have that jade disk for a few days when Lady Kenilworth brings it back. I think it's fair that I should, for it was my idea that you should hire it out. I'll pay the usual rate. And really I want to try

it badly. A lady I have been keen on for years keeps giving me the cold shoulder and then not giving it me—just the cold shoulder, not the hearty cold shoulder that you give me. The charm might work for me and just turn the scale, don't you think?"

Miss Timmins felt an odd twinge of discomfort as he told her this desire. But she was above all things just: the hiring out of the disk had been his idea and profitable; he had a claim on the use of it.

"It might work for you," she said, primly, without displaying any warm interest in the matter.

"Of course, I wouldn't do anything in the way of loosing the force. But the disk worked so quickly with Harmiston that I have an idea that it has a power apart from that. Of course it made Lady Kenilworth auto-suggest, probably. But why shouldn't it make me?" he said, hopefully.

"Why shouldn't it?" said Miss Timmins, a trifle scornfully; and then, reluctantly, she promised to let him have the charm.

HE went away very pleased, saying that he would hurry Lady Kenilworth up. When he had gone Miss Timmins found herself considering his design with a growing discomfort. Of course she had always known that his declaring, as he had so often declared, that he adored her was all nonsense; also that, even if it were not quite all nonsense, as his eyes and intonation had made her fancy sometimes, there could not be anything really serious in a young nobleman who had twice figured in the Divorce Court. But somehow this idea of a woman, a concrete object of his adoration, a woman whom he really loved, was astonishingly distasteful to her.

She strove hard to rid herself of this feeling; she told herself that it was perfectly silly. But slowly and unpleasantly the knowledge came to her that, in addition to the sane and practical Miss Timmins who made a living by selling objects of art and took a common-sense view of agreeable, cheerful, irresponsible young noblemen and their idle protestations, there was another Miss Timmins, deeper down, who was disposed to set quite another value on those protestations, disposed indeed to become a Scredington-fiend. She was rather horrified, naturally, by this discovery; and at once, in something of a panic, set about repressing this second Miss Timmins. Presently it was borne in upon her that this was hardly to be done.

For the rest of the day and the next day she brooded with a growing discontent and irritation on this woman. On the morning of the third day Lady Kenilworth brought back the charm.

She came into the shop, looking less shy, and as she gave back the disk to Miss Timmins, thanking her for letting her have it, she told her happily that she was engaged to be married. She seemed too happy to keep the good news to herself; the world must share it. Miss Timmins congratulated her, and, since she was set on demonstrating her gratitude, sold her a small, good powder-blue vase for twenty guineas.

Miss Timmins was not at all pleased to have the charm back. The second Miss Timmins rebelled against ringing Lord Scredington up and telling him. Before evening, indeed, the second Miss Timmins was in full control and the second Miss Timmins was furious. Why should this woman, who had been shilly-shallying all these years, have the benefit of the charm? She could not be interested, really interested, in Lord Scredington; that was why he was not interested in her, but just running after her. Probably he would get into trouble again.

Then the democrat, probably a social-democrat, in little Miss Timmins came to the fore. Why, she asked herself hotly, should these swells always have everything and she nothing? Of course, this woman had a dozen men running after her! Probably it was the second Miss Timmins who took this rather prejudiced view of the matter; certainly it was the second Miss Timmins who, in a final access of temper, tampered with the forbidden things and did things with the jade disk which should loose the forces.

She fell asleep in a mood of triumph and awoke in a panic. What had she gone and done? As she dressed, she kept looking at the jade charm on the chest of drawers with an immense uneasiness—at least the first Miss Timmins did. Even the second Miss Timmins was rather abashed and inclined to wish that she had let the forbidden things be. But the thing was done and there was no undoing it—thank goodness! The first Miss Timmins was strongly tempted to bury the charm fathoms deep in the back-yard—the least thing she could do was not to let it out of her possession. But she had promised to let Lord Scredington have it and she had to fulfil that promise. The second Miss Timmins was very decided about this obligation.

But when Lord Scredington did arrive, cheerful and debonair, Miss Timmins met him with an entirely untroubled air. No one could have guessed that her spirit was in any turmoil, much less that she had actually tampered with the forbidden things and thought it more than likely that she had

given to those sinister forces that lie behind the quiet mask of the commonplace world an outlet through the jade disk.

When it came to the actual handing over of the charm Miss Timmins was once more panic-stricken. But he had learnt that Lady Kenilworth had brought it back, and he asked for it eagerly. She saw no use in shilly-shallying; she had given him her promise; she gave him the charm. As she gave it to him the second Miss Timmins was very much to the fore, defiant, curious, mischievously, almost recklessly, triumphant.

She gave it to him, wrapped in the orange silk in the tortoiseshell incense-box. He asked her to make a small bag out of the square of silk, for he proposed to carry the charm in a waistcoat pocket. It was undoubtedly the second Miss Timmins who told him to hang it round his neck, as Lady Kenilworth had done, by the silk cord with which she had fitted it. He protested that he could not do that at the moment without taking off his collar and retying his tie; and as she sewed the square of silk into a bag, he discussed gleefully the probable effect of the charm upon the lady on whom he had set his heart.

It was probably the combined Miss Timminses who bade him be careful that the biter was not bit.

"But I'm always being bitten," he said simply.

He went away even more cheerful and debonair, leaving Miss Timmins excited, immensely curious, and rather fearful. It suddenly occurred to her that Lord Scredington not in love was uncommonly difficult to handle; how much more difficult would he be if he were in love—unless, of course, it had a softening effect on him. Knowing him so well, she could not bring herself to believe that it would have that effect.

In the course of the next thirty-six hours the excitement abated, leaving her in a suspense. Then came an anxiety that grew. She began to wonder impatiently when he would come again, and even to listen for his footfall on the pavement of Devonshire Street. This was uncommonly disquieting. She had never listened for his footfall before; most often she had rather glowered upon him when he did come. *Suppose—suppose the greatest love-charm in the world had a double kick to it?*

Again the first Miss Timmins was scared, the second stated triumphantly that she did not care a bit.

THEN, two mornings later, when Miss Timmins, polishing a crystal pendant, looked up to see Lord Scredington standing in the doorway, her heart jumped in the most curious way. She had never known it jump like that before. That jump had an odd effect on Miss Timmins: she flushed in the most delightful fashion and her startled eyes shone more brightly than December stars. She saw Lord Scredington start too, and then stare at her with surprised eyes as if there was some change in her, some change for the better. He came forward with that pleased, surprised look still on his face, and though, to her immense annoyance, she was still blushing, the first Miss Timmins contrived to greet him without any warmth in her tone, though she was not quite sure what the second Miss Timmins was doing with her eyes. He certainly smiled as if the second Miss Timmins was doing something rather nice with her eyes.

He gave her none of his cheek; he called her neither "Baby" nor "Beulah darling." She made a dash for the second Miss Timmins and got her well under control—at least she hoped she had, though she had an uneasy feeling that the second Miss Timmins was still doing things with her eyes.

He stayed for a long while, chatting—for the most part about Miss Timmins herself. He contrived to suggest that he had the greatest esteem and respect for her character and the greatest admiration of her beauty. He did not put either of these things into so many words; he just conveyed them. He seemed loath to go. He suggested that she should come to lunch at Thibault's and spend the rest of the afternoon dancing with him. The second Miss Timmins, quite reckless, was for accepting; the real Miss Timmins said that she could not leave the shop, and stuck to it. He went away gloomy, as he had often done before; but this time he did not obviously shake off his gloom the moment he stepped out of the shop door. There was something in the nature of a row between the two Miss Timminses.

He came back, appearing suddenly, at five o'clock. The sight of him produced the same distressing cardiac symptoms in Miss Timmins.

She had just made tea, and at the sound of the shop bell opened the parlour door. Her father caught sight of Lord Scredington through it and invited him to have tea with them. Did the young nobleman wait for her to second the invitation? He did not. He came straight in.

Her father liked him; often Lord Scredington made him, serious student of the travels of the lost tribes of Israel as he was, laugh. He made him laugh now. Then he behaved in an entirely treacherous fashion; he invited Miss Timmins to dine with him at Thibault's and dance afterwards. She

refused, but was forced to accept, since her father in his ignorance of the second Miss Timmins said that he could see no reason why she should not go. He said that it would do her good. The second Miss Timmins was inclined to riot; the first Miss Timmins was disgusted at being so trapped.

Lord Scredington stayed till seven. Most of the time he talked to Mr. Timmins, but he looked at Miss Timmins all the time. He looked at her with that queer expression of finding her different, different in an attractive way; also the expression seemed to be growing a trifle hungry. Was he developing a craving?

At seven he went away to dress. At a quarter to eight he called for Miss Timmins in his car and drove her to Thibault's. They dined and then they danced. Again he was pleasingly respectful, but his eyes and voice were caressing. Miss Timmins was enjoying herself more than ever she had enjoyed herself with him, and he appeared to be enjoying himself more than ever he had enjoyed himself with her; he looked at her with almost adoring eyes. But then a somewhat reckless air suited Miss Timmins, and she was looking rather on the ravishing side. More than once she found herself really thrilling.

The dancing came to an end too soon; and he drove her back to Devonshire Street. He came into the shop with her; and she switched on the electric light. They looked at one another with rather bemused eyes. Abruptly he caught her to him and kissed her. He had certainly never kissed her like that before. She shivered. He loosed her, said good night, and went towards the door on feet that seemed to drag. On the threshold he turned to look at her with eyes still bemused.

Miss Timmins, probably the first Miss Timmins, was looking at him queerly. There was a faint light of triumph in her eyes and her lips were curved in a delicate arrogance.

He seemed to awake; the mist lifted from his face; the light of understanding shone in his eyes as, in a rather breathless voice, he said: "Why—why—you little horror! You've set that charm working!"

Miss Timmins made one leap for the door at the back of the shop, was through it,

Her father invited him to have tea with them. Did the young nobleman wait for her to second the invitation? He did not. He came straight in.

snapped it to, turned the key in half a breath.

Lord Scredington beat on it gently with the flat of his hand and cried through it: "Beulah darling, I must kiss you again! It was for you I borrowed the charm—only for you! I swear it was! I've loved you for months and months!"

It could not be true; and the first Miss Timmins knew that it could not be true.

But the second Miss Timmins unlocked the door.

A NATIVE SUPERSTITION

by

"SAPPER"
(H.C.McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

BIG Jim Sefton pulled himself together as his horse shied violently across the track.

"Steady, old gal," he muttered. "It's a broken branch, not a snake."

The mare, still eyeing the thing that had alarmed her, sidled warily forward, and big Jim relapsed once more into his reverie. His face, tanned to a dark mahogany, was set and a little stern; his eyes—vivid blue eyes they were, contrasting strangely with the colour of his skin—were surrounded by a network of tiny wrinkles that proclaimed the dweller in the open of harsh lights. And just now the look in them showed that their owner's thoughts were many miles away.

Twenty—to be exact: twenty straight ahead, at the destination to which he was riding. The burning midday sun beat down on him from a cloudless blue sky: he didn't notice it. Big Jim had sojourned under that same scorching heat for too many years now for it to worry him. Splashes of brilliant colour in the trees that flanked the track, which would have called forth the excited admiration of most people, never even caused him to turn his head. The sight of an English rose garden would have appealed to him more than all the tropical flowers in the world. He had seen them all too often: he was sick of them with a deadly nausea. To him they were typical of the soul of the country: lovely, gaudy, and—meretricious.

"It's rotten," he suddenly said aloud. "Rotten. And why the devil I stay here God alone knows."

And then he laughed shortly; it was not the first time he had delivered himself of the same sentiment, and he was still there.

The laugh died away on his lips: once again his thoughts had gone back to the bungalow twenty miles ahead. How were the two people there faring in this land of harshness and crude contrasts? Two more unsuitable settlers it would have been hard to imagine—especially the man. And yet it was possible they had made good: in the course of his life big Jim had seen some amazingly square pegs fitting into the roundest of holes with apparent success.

It wasn't that Jack Fairbrace was a weakling—far from it. He was a good shot, and a first-class player of ball games. But he was essentially orthodox: he was part and parcel of the club life and social amenities of England. And big Jim couldn't picture him in Africa.

Enid—his wife—was different; but then a woman is always more adaptable than a man. He recalled that night at Henley, four years ago, when he had painted for her a description of the land he had made his own. Painted the glamour of it and the beauty: the passion of it and the appeal. And he'd believed it—then; he invariably did when he was away, which was why he always came back. And she had listened with her lips parted and her head a little thrown back.

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" Sorry, old gal," he said, gruffly, as the mare fidgeted under a hand grown suddenly powerful. " For the moment I thought of other things."

For it had been on the lap of the gods that night. The nearness of her, and the scent she used, had gone to his head. He could still hear the gentle lap of the water against the punt as they drifted lazily along: the faint strains of the band playing at Phyllis Court still rang in his head. And suddenly he had taken her in his arms and kissed her.

For a moment or two she had lain up against him; her lips on his. Then, very gently, she had pushed him away.

" Jim," she had said, quietly, " I ought to have told you I'm engaged. It isn't given out yet, and that's why I'm not wearing a ring."

" I see," said big Jim, and lit a cigarette with a hand that shook a little. " I'm sorry; I didn't know."

And because of a certain strict notion of honour he had gone away the next day. And she had let him go. He had said nothing more, though the Fates that govern these things alone know what would have been the result if he had. He knew that he loved her—at least he'd loved her that night; and she—well, she had wondered and waited and finally married Jack Fairbrace. Which has happened before in this world, and is likely to happen again. Moreover, she was happy with him, for Jack was a good soul and a white man. And if sometimes she thought of a big bronzed man with vivid blue eyes, and wondered where he was and what he was doing, she kept those thoughts to herself. Once or twice she had seen him before he went back to Africa, but always when other people were present. The mere fact that she had taken care that they were may, perhaps, serve as a pointer.

And then one day Jim Sefton—having just finished a fifteen months' trek in the back of beyond up Tanganyika way—arrived in Johannesburg. It was his permanent postal address, and amongst the mail that had been collecting for him he found a letter from Enid Fairbrace. It was nearly a year old, and it ran as follows:—

" *My dear Jim,*

" *By the time you get this—unless you're in Johannesburg at the moment—we shall be out in Africa ourselves. A bit of a surprise, isn't it, and I can still hardly believe that we're really going. But things are altering so in England, and servants are so difficult, and all one's money goes on merely living.*

" *At any rate, we're going to try something new. Do you remember that time you told me about the country, and how wonderful it was? We've bought a farm, more or less in partnership with another man. And we're coming out to make our fortunes. So mind you come and see us if ever you happen to be in our locality. I know it's rather like asking a man who has been in India whether he knew your cousin, but however much out of the way it is you must make a point of coming to see us—if only to tell us where we are making mistakes. Come whenever you like: don't bother to write.*

" *Yours very sincerely,*

" ENID FAIRBRACE."

He hadn't written: he had taken her at her word. It was so long now since her letter had come that he had decided it would be better to do so. In addition he wasn't sure exactly when he would be able to get to the address she had given: he had one or two other things to do first. And now, those things finished, he was on his way to renew a friendship which might so easily have become something else.

IT was over two years now since he had seen Enid Fairbrace, and he was conscious of a certain curious excitement at the prospect of meeting her again. He told himself that no trace of his old feeling for her remained: that he was merely going to see the wife of a man to whom he had taken quite a liking in England. But the curious excitement refused to vanish at this logical and cold-blooded presentation of the case, and after a while, with a little shrug of his broad shoulders, Jim Sefton admitted the truth to himself. He was in love with another man's wife: he always had been in love with her, and he'd been a silly quixotic fool to let her go without a struggle.

He glanced at the sun and realized the time was about three o'clock.

" Another three miles," he muttered to himself, and broke into a jog-trot. The track was clearly defined, and, with the directions given him by the man at the railway station thirty miles back from whom he had hired his horse, it presented no difficulties to a man like Jim Sefton. To a townsman it would probably have seemed impenetrable jungle bush: to Sefton's practised eye the route was as clearly marked as if there had been signposts.

" There's the drift, old gal," he said as the horse splashed through the shallow water. " Only another two miles to go."

And then he pulled up: a white man, with a gun under his arm, had suddenly appeared in a clearing in front of him.

" Good afternoon," said Jim Sefton. " I'm right, ain't I, for the Fairbraces' house? "

"Straight as you can go," answered the stranger, staring at him intently. "Are you a doctor by any chance?"

"I am not," said Sefton. "Why? Anybody ill?"

"Fairbrace is pretty seedy," answered the other man. "I'm Granger—his partner. Live with them."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Sefton. "Malaria?"

"Personally I think he's got a bad dose of tick fever," said Granger. "High temperature: all the usual symptoms."

"How is Mrs. Fairbrace?" said Sefton after a pause, and once again the other man eyed him intently.

"Very fit," he answered after a short pause. "A little uneasy, naturally, about her husband. You know them, I suppose?"

"Quite well," said Sefton. "In fact, I was on my way to answer in person a year-old invitation of hers to look them up. I've been up Tanganyika way, and found the letter waiting for me two or three weeks ago in Jo'burg. Sefton is my name."

The other man nodded.

"I rather guessed you were. Heard them mention you often."

"How are they getting on?" asked Sefton. "Have you got a good show here?"

"Quite," said Granger, briefly. "We want the railway, of course. But there's always a catch somewhere. However, you'll see for yourself. The house is on some high ground about a mile and a half ahead. And look out for snakes: there are a lot of mambas about."

"Thanks; I will," answered the other. "See you later, I take it."

With a nod he trotted on, and then, just before he got to a turn in the track, something impelled him to look back. Granger was still standing motionless staring after him, though the instant Sefton looked round he turned and vanished into the bush. And a slight frown showed for an instant on big Jim's forehead. Doubtless it was quite unreasonable, but he was conscious of a distinct feeling of dislike for Jack Fairbrace's partner.

The frown deepened as he rode on. He had come now to stretches of cultivated land, which he knew must belong to the people he was going to see. And though he kept a wary eye skinned for that most deadly of all snakes—the black mamba—subconsciously he took in the condition of the ground through which he was riding.

JIM SEFTON was not a farmer himself, but few men in Africa had a sounder knowledge of the game. And it was soon obvious to him that this was very far from being a good show. The part he was going through was under cotton, and he could tell at a glance that the crop was poor and the weeds plentiful. In the distance there were some tired-looking orange trees, chiefly remarkable for the complete absence of fruit. In fact, everything showed unmistakable signs of neglect and laziness.

"Something very wrong," he reflected. "I'm glad I came."

Suddenly in the distance he saw the house, and his mare, as if sensing the end of the journey, quickened her pace. And five minutes later he was shaking hands with Enid Fairbrace, whilst a boy took his horse away to the outhouse that served as a stable.

"Jim," she cried, "but I'm glad to see you!"

He smiled gravely, and studied her with his keen blue eyes.

"You're looking well, Enid," he said at length. "Awfully well. A bit worried, but I suppose that's due to Jack's fever."

"How did you know anything about that?" she asked in surprise.

"I met your partner, Granger, down by the drift," he answered, and if he noticed the sudden shadow that passed over her face he said nothing. "I'm sorry he's so seedy. Granger said something about tick fever."

"He's got this beastly temperature which he can't shake off," she said, leading the way into the house. "I don't think it is anything serious, but it makes the poor old boy so weak and irritable. Come and see him."

He followed her into her husband's bedroom, and the sick man sat up with a smile when he saw him.

"Hullo, Jim!" he cried. "Where the deuce have you sprung from?"

Jim Sefton sat down on the bed and laughed.

"Out of the blue, as usual, old man," he answered. "Only got Enid's letter three weeks ago. This is a bad affair, though, finding you down with fever. How did you get it?"

"Out shooting the other day with Bill," said Fairbrace, irritably. "That's Granger—my partner. Or, to be correct, I should say I'm his. This place belonged to him originally, and he supplies all the farming knowledge."

"He does, does he?" remarked Jim Sefton. "And what do you supply—the capital?"

"Well, naturally, I've put in a bit of cash," answered the other. "And, by Jove, it's a pretty expensive game. Still, as Bill says, you've got to put money in if you want to get money out."

"Good afternoon," said Jim Sefton, as he pulled up. "I'm right, ain't I, for the Fairbraces' house?"

Jim Sefton grunted and did not pursue the topic. He took a glance at the marks on the sick man's neck, and felt no doubt in his own mind that Granger's diagnosis was right, and that tick fever was the trouble. He told them so, which reassured Enid considerably, and then, having talked for a time to the invalid, he followed her into the hall for tea. And the first thing that struck him was the difference between the inside of the farm and what lay outside. There were no evidences here of the laziness and neglect which had been so obvious as he had ridden up; everything was cosy and comfortable. English chintzes; big easy chairs; flowers prettily arranged; and with a sigh of satisfaction he took the cup she handed him.

"You've made it charming, Enid," he said. "Perfectly charming. Jack and his partner are two singularly fortunate individuals."

And as he spoke there came the sound of a shot. It was fairly close, and instinctively Jim Sefton sat up in his chair.

"It's probably Mr. Granger," said Enid. "He's always shooting something."

"It sounded pretty near," said Sefton. "Not more than a couple of hundred yards away."

"I expect it's a snake," she answered, indifferently. "There are a lot near here."

They looked round as a step came on the stoep outside, and the next moment Granger entered.

"Got a mamba," he cried. "A big one. Care to see it, Enid? I've got it outside."

She gave a little shudder.

"Well, please keep it there. Do you want some tea, Mr. Granger?"

He took the cup she handed him and sat down.

"I've really brought it up to show Jack," he remarked. "Would you believe it, Sefton, but he's never seen one all the time he's been out here."

Jim Sefton grunted his surprise and went on with his tea. At the moment he

was more interested in the fact that Granger called his partner's wife Enid, and she, very pointedly, did not call him Bill. And during the next half-hour or so his interest did not wane. Not much ever escaped those keen eyes of his, and in this case the signs were plain to read. Granger was in love with Enid Fairbrace, and she was fully aware of the fact. Equally plain was the other side of the case, that she was not in love with Granger.

There was nothing novel in the situation, and once or twice a cynical smile twitched round his lips. When two men and a singularly attractive woman live together in the back of beyond, something of the sort is likely to occur. And the only variation that is of interest is the end, which in primitive places is frequently in keeping with its surroundings.

IT was typical of the man that he should come straight to the point when he found himself alone with Enid that evening before dinner. They were strolling round the little garden she had made near the house, and suddenly he paused and waved his stick comprehensively round the ground that lay beneath them.

"What's the idea, Enid?" he remarked. "I suppose you know you're just throwing money away going on as you are at present?"

She changed colour a little as she stared at him.

"What do you mean, Jim?" she demanded.

"My dear," he said, gravely, "the work on your farm is rotten. I haven't examined it closely; I don't know whether you've got a good proposition here, granted it is worked efficiently, or not. But what I do know is that, worked as it is at present, you'll never make a penny."

"But Mr. Granger said it was going so well," she stammered.

"Then Mr. Granger is a damned liar," returned Jim Sefton. "You don't like him, do you, Enid?"

It was more of a statement than a question.

"No, I don't," she answered quietly. "I positively dislike him. But I thought he knew all about farming, and that's why——"

"You go on living in the same house with a man who is in love with you."

He lit a cigarette and looked at her with a faint smile.

"You're pretty quick, Jim," she said.

"My dear," he answered, "I'm in love with you myself. I know it now; I've been in love with you all along. Like a fool, I let you go at the beginning, and now it's too late."

"Yes," she said very steadily, "it's too late now, Jim."

"Then it wouldn't have been too late if I'd told you before; if I'd——" For the life of him he couldn't help the tremble in his voice.

"No, my dear," she told him in a low voice. "It wouldn't have been too late. But I thought it was just a summer evening's madness."

For a while they stood side by side in silence; then big Jim squared his shoulders.

"We can all make pretty average fools of ourselves," he said, abruptly. "And I'm certainly no exception to the rule. I guess I'll have to be moving on, Enid; to stop here is going to be a bit beyond my powers. But before I go I'd like to try and straighten up this little show of yours. There's no earthly good you two going on as you are at present."

"But what are we going to do, Jim? Jack and Mr. Granger drew up a sort of deed of partnership. You see, the land belonged originally to Mr. Granger, and the idea was that Jack's money should be used for its development."

"And a very excellent idea indeed," answered Jim, dryly, "if it was being properly developed. As it is, Granger is not doing his side of the bargain. What has been done with the money I don't know. If it has been put into the land then Granger is hopelessly inefficient; if it hasn't, he's a scoundrel. Either way he cuts no ice, and the sooner he's told so the better. My dear," he went on after a while, "I know the brand. I've met 'em before. They generally drink too much, and they're incapable of putting their backs into an honest job of work. In this case the specimen has fallen into very pleasant quarters. He is supplied with money by Jack; he has the most charming and delightful home; and he is in love with you. And it's the last item"—his mouth tightened a little—"that gets my goat particularly."

"I hate him," said Enid, under her breath. "It's the way he looks at me sometimes. Oh, Jim, if only we could get rid of him—buy him out or something—and you could come and help us!"

It was out before she realized what she'd said, and Jim Sefton gave a short laugh.

"Do you think that would help, Enid?" he answered. "What about the last item?"

"I wasn't thinking, Jim," she whispered. "Forget it."

"Impossible," he smiled. "But we'll rule it out as a method of settlement."

"Anyway, you'll stop till Jack gets better, won't you, Jim?"

"Yes; I'll stop till Jack gets better. In fact, this matter can't be fixed up until

"My dear," he said, gravely, "the work on your farm is rotten. Worked as it is at present, you'll never make a penny."

he does get better. He's got to do the talking, and if he attempted to do it now it would only send his temperature up and make him worse. But I'll be here to back him up: I promise you that."

For a moment or two he stared at the sun as it sank lower and lower in the west. Then he turned to the woman at his side.

"My God! Enid—what fools we are at times: what cursed fools! You're very fond of Jack, I know; but there's something else I know too. And it was my fault, all my stupid blundering fault."

"No, dear," she answered quietly, "it wasn't. It was just one of those things that happen, why or how one doesn't quite know when one looks back. And the only thing that is left is to play the game."

Big Jim Sefton nodded, and held out his hand.

"Right you are, partner," he said. "It's a bargain: we'll play the game."

AND inside the house at that moment, whilst Jack Fairbrace tossed and muttered feverishly in his bed, his partner, with a three-finger sundowner in his hand, was perfecting the last details of his particular game.

The sudden arrival of Jim Sefton on the scene was an undoubted nuisance. He looked the type of uncompromising individual to whom explanations might prove difficult. For even as Sefton had recognized the type to which Granger belonged, so had Granger placed the new-comer with equal accuracy. And big Jim belonged to the type that the Grangers of this world most fear and dislike: the type that is straight as a die and yet on occasions will take the law into its own hands and administer it in a fashion distinctly illegal.

That he was bound to spot that all was not well with the farm, Granger knew. The marvel was that he had been able to keep it from the Fairbraces for as long as he had. But on that point he didn't feel much concern: sooner or later it would have been bound to come out. He would have preferred to have postponed it a little, until the other thing had been settled; and even now it was quite on the cards that nothing would be said until Jack got over his fever.

With a hand that suddenly shook uncontrollably, Granger poured himself out another stiff drink. *Until* he got over his fever——

It started another train of thought in his mind: the old, old train that had never been long absent since Enid Fairbrace had come into his life. At first it had been vague and transitory: and then after a while it had become fixed and ugly. Once or twice he had recoiled from it, not because of some sudden interlude of decent feeling, but merely because it frightened him. Granger had a very wholesome respect for his own skin, and he was fully aware of what happened to those who broke the sixth commandment. And even if the thing could be done so that legally there was no proof against him, that would not be sufficient for his purpose. No trace of suspicion must arise in Enid's mind that he had anything to do with it.

It had been difficult: a hundred different schemes for the removal of what he fondly believed to be the obstacle to his own happiness had suggested themselves, only to be rejected one by one. A shooting accident had held pride of place for some time, but that had at length gone the way of the others. It was true it could be staged in such a way as to make his own neck safe, but what would Enid say? To kill a man accidentally is not the surest way of gaining the widow's affection.

And so it had gone the way of the others, and he had hung on wondering and plotting and never getting any nearer the mark until that very afternoon, when, in a flash, the master-idea had come. He wondered if it was always the same; if the obvious, the only, plan invariably came suddenly like that. It was so simple, so sure. If not to-night, nor to-morrow night—then the night after. Or the one after that. He could afford to wait a few days now; he who had already waited a year.

He rose to his feet as the sound of steps outside announced the return of the others. So engrossed had he been in his scheme that he had almost forgotten Jim Sefton, and he scowled as he heard his deep laugh on the stoep. And then the scowl was replaced by a look of triumph: the second sundowner was beginning to take effect. All the more kudos to him for pulling off his plan right under the damned fellow's nose: he wasn't afraid of a dozen Seftons. His scheme was safe; absolutely and completely safe.

Throughout dinner he dominated the conversation, and the level of the whisky in the decanter fell rapidly. He could talk well when he chose to, and if the other two were a little silent he attributed it to his own brilliance. No reference was made to the farm, and after a while he began to wonder if his fears as to Sefton's powers of observation had not been groundless. So much the better; anyway, it didn't much matter.

The meal concluded, he made some excuse and went out of doors. Sefton had declined his perfunctory suggestion that he should join him in a stroll, and, stretched out in an armchair, was watching Enid through the smoke of his cigarette. His opinion of Granger had been confirmed by what he had

seen: he talked too much and he drank too much, which is a bad mixture in anyone, but fatal in a man whose job is the land.

And then he dismissed Granger from his mind. Enid was there in front of him, and thoughts were not included in playing the game. Yes; he'd been a fool—a silly, quixotic fool. Or had it been, as Enid said, just one of those things that happen one knows not why nor how?

Just once or twice their eyes met and held, and then with a sigh he rose and stretched his big frame.

"I'll go and look up the invalid," he said, "and after that I think I'll turn in pretty early."

She was doing some needlework, and just for a moment he laid his hand on her shoulder as he passed. She gave a little quiver, and his grip tightened. Then he went on into Jack's room.

FOR a while he stood looking down at the sick man. The fever had come back, and he was hot and restless. Outside the tree beetles kept up their everlasting chorus, and from the far distance came once the coughing grunt of a lion.

He sat down by the bed and pulled out his cigarette case. There was nothing to be done for Jack Fairbrace: only time would cure him. But unbidden, thrust out as soon as it was there, the thought came into his mind. Supposing he didn't pull through; supposing——

He shut his case with an angry snap, and a cigarette rolled out on the floor. And then things happened rapidly. At one moment he was leaning forward to pick up his cigarette; the next he was at the other side of the room with every vestige of colour out of his face. For in stooping down he had looked under the bed.

And now, silent as a cat, he again stooped down and stared. For perhaps half a minute he remained motionless: then step by step, with a puzzled frown on his face, he approached the man who still tossed and turned and muttered. He took a candle off the table and put it on the floor in order to see better, and when at length he rose to his feet his face looked as if it had been carved out of granite. For temptation—fierce, bitter temptation—had come to Jim Sefton. And it lasted—but what matter how long it lasted? Time is not the essence of the thing that put big Jim on the rack and left him sweating.

Gradually his face relaxed a little, and he shook himself like a dog. The fight was over: it almost made him laugh to think that it had ever taken place. He walked to the door and glanced out: Enid's head was still bent over her work. Then he returned to the bed and, stooping down, he pulled out the thing that lay underneath. Concealing it as well as he could with his coat, he crossed the hall behind Enid's back and entered Granger's room. And the next moment there lay under Granger's bed that which had caused Jim Sefton such a shock.

He re-entered the hall and sat down opposite Enid. His expression was normal again, the hand that held his cigarette as steady as a rock. And after a while—it was just as his keen ears caught the sound of a footstep outside—he spoke.

"I shall probably sit up latish with Granger to-night, my dear. But don't you wait up."

She looked up at him quickly: there was a strange new note in his voice.

"What is it, Jim? Why do you speak like that?"

But he only shook his head with a grave smile.

"Don't worry your head about anything. Just a native superstition: that's all. Go and sit with Jack for a bit, and then go to bed."

And as Granger opened the front door she rose and went into her husband's room. Jim Sefton had moved his chair a little so that his face was in the shadow. And he noted the gloating look in Granger's eyes as they followed her.

"Very pleasant out now," he said, calmly, and Granger nodded.

"Very."

He sat down so that he could watch the door of Jack's bedroom, and Jim's eyes never left his face. For ten minutes or a quarter of an hour they kept up a desultory conversation, and then came the symptom Jim Sefton had been waiting for—the thing that proved finally what he wanted to know. Granger was getting nervous, and was answering at random.

Twice he rose and walked over to the door of Jack's room, and the second time he went in.

"Hadn't you better be careful, Enid?" he said. "In case there's a possible risk of infection and all that."

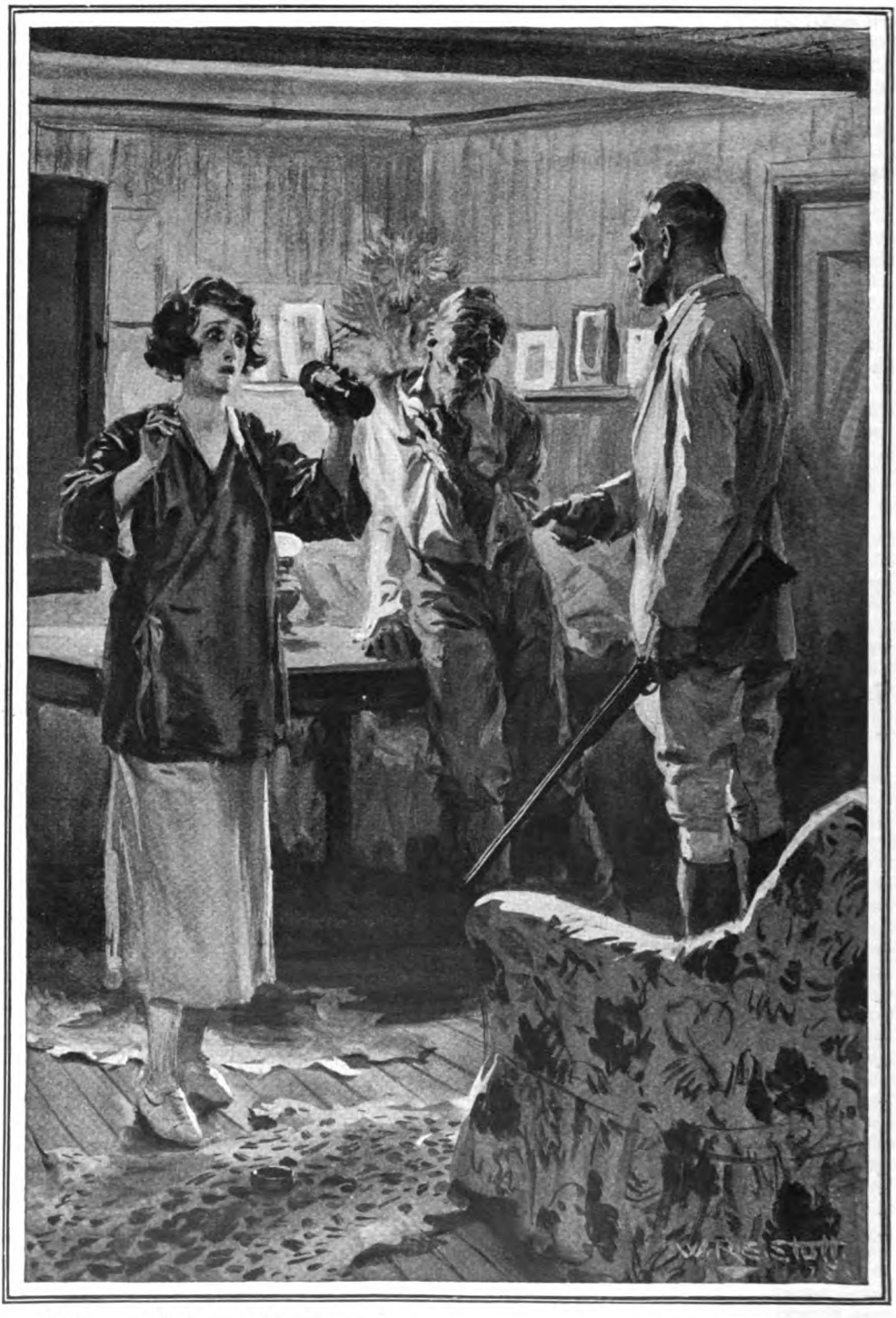
"Tick fever isn't infectious," remarked Jim Sefton, quietly. "Still, you're looking a bit done in, Enid; why don't you turn in?"

He was standing behind Granger as he spoke, and when she saw the look in his eyes she rose at once.

"I think I will," she said. "I'm feeling a bit sleepy. Good night."

She passed between the two men, and they waited until they heard her door close.

"You're quite right, Granger," said Sefton. "In this climate women mustn't do too



"It's empty," she cried in despair.
"Who emptied it?" said Jim, in a terrible voice. "Who emptied it, Granger?"

much. Personally I think a little drink, and I shall follow her example."

He followed the other man back into the hall, and glanced at his watch. It was nine o'clock, and at eleven they were still sitting there. Moreover, the whisky bottle that had been full was now empty.

It was when he perceived the fact that Granger announced his intention of going to bed. A very decent fellow, Sefton, he had decided : misjudged him badly. Bit of a fool : give no trouble, anyway. As a matter of fact he'd meant to be in bed before : it might happen any moment now. Might have happened while they were sitting there, which would have been a bit awkward. Oughtn't to have sat up so long. Once in bed bound to be a delay, and delay fatal.

He swayed a little : his brain was most confoundedly muzzy. Damned fellow Sefton must have a head like a copper boiler. And those blue eyes of his seemed to bore into one's brain.

He staggered and pulled himself together : no doubt about it, he'd had one too many.

" Good night, ole boy," he remarked, unsteadily. " Show you round the bally farm to-morrow."

With a candle in his hand he lurched off to his room, whilst big Jim still sat motionless. Even after the door had closed he never moved, though his brain was busy. It was justice—primitive justice—if it succeeded. And if it didn't——

A crash from Granger's room announced that he had upset the water jug. And then it came—a sudden terrible scream of mortal fear. It startled even big Jim himself, though his hand was steady as he reached for the gun beside him.

Simultaneously the doors of Granger's and Enid's rooms burst open. But it was on Granger that Jim Sefton's eyes were fixed.

" A mamba ! " he yelled. " I've been bitten by a mamba ! Quick ! Oh ! my God—be quick ! "

" Where's the potassium permanganate ? " said big Jim, and Enid darted across to a cupboard.

" It's empty," she cried in despair. " It was full this morning, I know."

And once again Jim Sefton's blue eyes were fixed on Granger. His face was chalky : his shaking mouth gibbered inarticulate words.

" Who emptied it ? " said Jim, in a terrible voice. " Who emptied it, Granger ? "

And Granger cursed foully, only to begin raving once again for mercy. Into his fuddled brain had come the certainty that Jim knew : the certainty also that nothing could save him. It was he who had emptied the bottle of permanganate : it was he who had signed his own death warrant. How his plans had miscarried he had no idea—all that mattered was that they had.

A figure in pyjamas appeared in the door of Jack's room.

" What is it ? " muttered the sick man, weakly. " What's happened ? "

But no one answered him : no one even knew he was there. For the end was near, and Granger was not a pretty sight. And Enid, in spite of having loathed the man, was crying softly, though her brain was racing in a jumbled chaos of thought. What had Jim meant by asking who had emptied the bottle ?

IT was Jim who took charge when it was over. It was Jim who went to the window of Granger's room and shot the snake inside by the light of the candle on the table. It was Jim who put Jack back to bed, and sat up with Enid till she fell asleep in her chair. And he was still sitting opposite her when the dawn came, so that the first thing she was conscious of as she woke were those vivid blue eyes of his.

But during the days that followed he said very little, and she asked no questions. And it was only as he was going, a fortnight later, that she could stand it no longer. Jack was fit : arrangements for disposing of the farm were in train : and then they were going back to England.

" Jim," she said, as she stood beside his horse, " there was some mystery that night. What was it ? "

For a moment a tiny smile flickered over his lips.

" There is a native superstition, my dear," he said, gravely, " which, like so many things of that sort, is founded on fact. They say that if you kill a snake, its mate will come to find it. Granger killed a mamba that afternoon : I killed the mate that night. You see, the dead snake was under his bed."

" But what can have induced him to put it there ? " she cried.

" I wonder," answered big Jim Sefton.

He bent down suddenly and raised to his lips the hand lying on his horse's neck. Then he dug his heels in, and without a backward glance trotted off along the road that to a townsman's eye would have seemed impenetrable bush.

Confessions of a Humorist

By

JEROME K. JEROME

III—TRIALS OF A DRAMATIST.

My first play—Charles Hawtrey's advice—A gorgeous lunch wasted—Reading a play to Beerbohm Tree and Mrs. Patrick Campbell—Collaborating with Eden Phillpotts—"The author who listens to advice is lost"—Writing a part for Arthur Roberts—"The Passing of the Third-Floor Back."

A LADY, on one occasion, asked me why I did not write a play.

"I am sure, Mr. Jerome," she continued, with a bright encouraging smile, "that you could write a play."

I told her I had written nine: that six of them had been produced, that three of them had been successful both in England and America; that one of them was still running at the Comedy Theatre and approaching its two-hundredth night.

Her eyebrows went up in amazement.

"Dear me!" she said, "you do surprise me!"

George R. Sims told me that once he dined some friends at the Savoy. Over the coffee he asked them if they would like to go to a theatre, and they said they would. He took them to a play of his own. For some reason that Sims could not explain, they did not like it. At the end of the first act, one of them, turning to him, said:—

"Rather dull stuff this. Don't you find it so?"

"Well, now you come to mention it, perhaps it is, a trifle," agreed Sims.

"Let's go on to the Empire," suggested another.

The proposal was carried *nem. con.*, and, leaving their programmes behind them, the troop arose and made their way out of the theatre noisily and cheerfully, followed by Sims, walking soberly.

"It used to annoy me," added Sims, "that not one theatregoer in a hundred ever takes the trouble to read the author's name. That evening I was glad of it."

"Barbara" was my first play. I am informed that nowadays managers read plays by unknown authors. In my young days they didn't. I read it to Rose Norreys, one evening, at her little flat in Chelsea Gardens, and, good comrade that she was, she took it herself to Charles Hawtrey, and stood over him until he had finished it. He wrote me asking me to come and see him the following Tuesday at twelve o'clock noon—he underlined "noon." He was running "The Private Secretary" at the Globe. I got there at twenty minutes to, and walked up and down Holywell Street until I heard Big Ben strike twelve. The stage-doorkeeper said Mr. Hawtrey wasn't in. I said I would wait. The doorkeeper—a kindly soul, I wish I could remember his name—put me a chair by the fire and gave me a thumbed copy of "The Talisman." He said that, speaking for himself, he considered it the best of all Scott's novels. Hawtrey turned up at a quarter-past three. The stage-doorkeeper introduced us, and explained things.

"I'm so sorry!" said Hawtrey. "I thought it was Monday."

His first wife told me that the night before their wedding his best man had—unknown to him—put his watch on an hour

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and a quarter, with the result that he got there five minutes too soon; and in the Bankruptcy Court he used to be known as "the late Mr. Charles." But he was always so charming about it that one generally forgave him.

He told me that he liked my little play immensely. There was only one fault he had to find. It was too short. I record the fact as being the only known instance in the history of the stage of a manager suggesting to an author that his play was not long enough. I promised to write in an extra scene.

"My brother George will see you about terms," he concluded, as we shook hands. "He will want you to sell it outright. Take my tip and don't do it. It's just the sort of thing to catch on with the amateurs."

The "producer" had not then arrived. He was an American invention. The stage-manager, together with the prompter and the author, used to just worry it out. I have never been able myself to detect any difference. "Dot" Boucicault was one of the first, and for straightforward work is still among the best. If anything he is too painstaking. His method at rehearsal is to play all the parts himself, leaving the actor to copy him. On a certain occasion he had been coaching Gertrude Kingston, after this manner, for about a fortnight; and then one morning, taking her aside, he asked her how she liked her part.

"What part?" asked Gertrude Kingston.

"What part?" repeated Boucicault, astonished. "Why, *your* part — the Countess."

"Oh, that!" answered Miss Kingston. "I thought you were playing that."

I take it Du Maurier's dictum really sums up the matter: That a play that is worth producing produces itself.

Cissy Grahame was my Barbara. She has not changed much, and I love her still. "Barbara" ran, on and off, for years, and amateurs still play it. Following Charles Hawtrey's advice, I had refused to sell it, though his brother George went up to a hundred pounds, and the temptation was sore. Another one-act play, "Fennel," I wrote for George Giddens, who had taken the Novelty, now the Kingsway—or rather adapted it from the French of François Coppée. Managers clamoured then for adaptations from the French.

"WOODBARROW FARM" was my first full-sized play. Gertrude Kingston produced it at a *matinée*, playing herself the Adventuress. The trial *matinée* was a useful institution. I think it a pity it has dropped out. The manager would lend the theatre in return for an option on the play; and the leading parts could generally be arranged for on a like understanding. At the cost of about a hundred pounds, a play could be put before the public and judged: in the only way a play can be judged—through the test tube of an audience. Three out of four, in spite of friendly stalls, were seen to be no good; the fourth won the prize. Charles Hawtrey lent us the Comedy. Frederick Harrison, now the *doyen* of London managers, was in it. He played a gentlemanly villain. And Eric Lewis made the small part of a valet the chief thing in the play. John Hare bought it. He wanted a play for young Sydney Brough, son of old Lal Brough, a bright, handsome lad, full of promise then. He had been a pupil of mine when I was a schoolmaster at the "South Lambeth Road Academy. For Sons of Gentlemen" I forget how it came about, but eventually Tom Thorne took it for his opening piece at the new Vaudeville. He played the valet. Bernard Partridge was the hero.

Conway had been cast for the part originally. That was another sad story. He had made his name as Romeo to Adelaide Neilson's Juliet, the most Shakespearean Juliet I have ever seen, though Phyllis Neilson-Terry, some years ago, ran her close. It was plain before rehearsals were a week old that poor Conway would have to be replaced; and the grim task of breaking it to him fell upon me. I called upon him early in the morning at the Adelphi Hotel. He was standing with his back to me when I entered the room, leaning his head against the mantelpiece.

"I know what you've come for," he said, without turning round. "It's my own fault. I thought I'd pulled myself together. I must have another try—later on."

Dan Frohman took the play for America. He wrote me that he was staying at the Hotel Victoria and would call and see me. We were living then in Alpha Place. My wife thought it would be an artful plan to lunch him well first and talk business with him afterwards. He accepted our invitation. We felt we had him in our hands. It was a gorgeous lunch. There was caviare and a stuffed bird and tricky things in French. For two days and a half my wife had lived with Mrs. Beeton. I saw to the cocktails myself, and after there was Château-Laffitte and champagne. I can still see my wife's face when Frohman in his grave, emphatic way explained that his digestion did not allow him to lunch; but might he have a few of the greens and some dry toast with a glass of Apollinaris. But he smoked a cigar with me afterwards, and gave me good terms for the play.

The brothers Frohman, Charles and Dan,

were good men to do business with. Their word was their bond. Charles used to say that no contract was ever drawn that a clever man could not get out of, if he wanted to. Towards the end I never bothered him to sign anything. We would fix the terms over a cigar and shake hands. He was a natural born sentimentalist (most Jews are). He spent a good deal of his time when in England at Marlow, where now stands a memorial to him. I had a house upon the hills, and Haddon Chambers used to rent a cottage at Bisham, near the Abbey. On a sunny afternoon one often found Charles sitting on his own grave in Marlow Churchyard—or rather on the spot he hoped would one day be his grave : a pleasant six foot into four of English soil, under the great willow that overhangs the river. He was still in negotiation for it the last time that I talked to him there. He went down in the *Lusitania* the year following.

READING a play to a manager is a trying ordeal. I remember Addison Bright sending me a message at twelve o'clock one night to come at once to his flat, and bring with me a comedy of mine, "Dick Hulward," that Sothern was then playing in America. Tree and Mrs. Pat Campbell were waiting for me. Tree had engaged Mrs. Pat for his "star" to open at Her Majesty's in three weeks' time, but had not found a play for her. He thought he had—some half-a-dozen of them altogether—but she had turned them all down one after the other. It was a dismal night. Tree sat watching Mrs. Pat's face, and evidently did not mind what the play was. I fell to doing the same and hardly knew what I was reading. Sometimes she laughed and sometimes she yawned, but most of the time she just sat. The dawn was breaking when I finished. She would not make up her mind even then. Tree, on the stairs, thanked me for a pleasant night. Frederick Harrison is the most courteous manager I have ever read to. If he likes the play he shows it ; and if he doesn't he makes you feel that the fault is not yours but his. Frohman, until the end, would give no sign of what he was thinking. One hoped he was awake, but was not sure. He never pretended to know what the public wanted, and had a contempt for anyone who did.

"I'll tell you what a play is going to do after I've seen the second night's returns," he would say. "Some people will tell you before ; but they're mostly fools."

First-night receptions tell nothing. First-nighters are a race apart. Like the Greeks, they hanker after a new thing. The general public, on the other hand, are faithful to their old loves. I met Arthur Shirley one afternoon. A new and original drama of his was to be produced that evening at Drury Lane.

"Feeling cheerful ?" I asked him.

"Tolerably," he told me. "There are three rattling good situations in it."

"Capital," I said. "You think they will go all right ?"

"Well, they ought to," he answered. "They always have."

The piece, I am glad to record, ran the whole season.

The last play I wrote for Charles Frohman was in collaboration with Haddon Chambers. He paid us a good sum down, but never produced it. We had made our chief comic character a Lord Mayor of London, and Frohman was nervous about it. He had the foreigner's fixed notion that the Lord Mayor of London is, next to the King, the most exalted personage in all England ; and feared that to put him on the stage in company with ordinary mortals would be to outrage all the better feelings of the British public. I am sorry. He was a jolly old chap, and, I think, original. We had given him a sense of humour.

"New Lamps for Old" I wrote for Cissie Grahame. She produced it at Terry's Theatre. Augustin Daly took the play for America, and Ada Rehan and John Drew played in it. Ada Rehan was superb in passion. Her Catherine in "The Taming of the Shrew" was a magnificent performance. It began like a tornado and ended like a summer's breeze whispering to the willows. But John Drew in Shakespeare always suggested to me "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur." Afterwards, Daly asked me to adapt Sudermann's "Die Ehre." I had marvelled up till then at the linguistic range of the average dramatic author who at a moment's notice "adapts" you from the Russian, or the Scandinavian, or any other language that you choose. I did not then know any German, and had to confess it.

"That'll be all right," said Daly. "I'll send you a literal translation."

For translations a shilling a folio used to be the price generally paid to the harmless, necessary alien.

Somewhat against my conscience, I consented to bowdlerize Sudermann's play so as not to offend the Elderly Gentleman who still rules the English and American stage. Poor Jones went farther when he adapted Ibsen's "Doll's House." In the last act Helmer took the forgery upon himself, and the curtain went down on Norah flinging herself into his arms with the cry of "Husband!" and the band played "Charlie is my darling." That was the first intro-

duction of Ibsen to the British public. "A charming author," was the verdict first passed upon Ibsen in London.

I wrote "The MacHaggis" in collaboration with Eden Phillpotts. Penley accepted it, but fell ill, and handed the part over to Weedon Grossmith. Our heroine shocked the critics. She rode a bicycle. It was unwomanly, then, to ride a bicycle. There were so many things, in those days, that were unwomanly to do. It must have been quite difficult to be a woman, and remain so day after day. She smoked a cigarette. The Devil must have been in us. Up till then only the adventuress had ever smoked a cigarette. In the last act she said "damn." She said it twice. Poor Clement Scott nearly fell out of *The Daily Telegraph*. Once before, it is true, a lady (Mrs. Huntley, I think) had said "damn" upon the stage, but that was in a translation from the French. No one dreamed the day would come when Mrs. Pat Campbell would say something even stronger. But it is an age of progress, we are told. One blushes at the thought of what they may say next.

Phillpotts and myself had bad luck over "The MacHaggis." It was doing well when Penley suddenly closed the theatre. His illness, it turned out, was mental.

One of the things I best remember in "The MacHaggis" was Reeves Smith's performance of a cheerful idiot. He was a delightful actor. He went to America soon after, and they never let him come back. I met him there when on a lecturing tour. He was playing with Nazimova. I went behind to see him.

"Forgive me," I said, so soon as his dresser had left the room, "but aren't you making him rather too noisy?" They were playing Ibsen's "The Master Builder."

"Great heavens," he answered. "You don't think it's my idea, do you? It's the new method over here. Everybody has to shout at the top of their voice, except the star. 'How quiet and natural she is,' they say. 'What a contrast!' Clever idea. Gillette invented it."

Another play Phillpotts and I wrote together was "The Prude's Progress." I read it one evening to a little Jew gentleman, a friend of Fanny Brough's, at his chambers in Piccadilly. "Read it to him after dinner," she had counselled me. Dear,

Tree sat watching Mrs. Pat's face, and evidently did not mind what the play was.

sentimental, fat old gentleman, how he cried over the pathetic parts! At the end he shook me by both hands, and wrote me an agreement then and there. He left the business arrangements to me, and I took the Comedy Theatre and gathered together a company regardless of expense, among others Fanny Brough, Teddy Righton, Cyril Maude, Lena Ashwell, glorious in her first youth and beauty. Bernard Partridge was to have played an up-to-date journalist who knew everything and was not ashamed of it; an amusing fellow, and Partridge would have played him to perfection.

Alas and alack, I listened to advice. The author who listens to advice is lost. During the second rehearsal your manager draws you aside. He has been talking the play over with his mother-in-law. It seems that she likes it immensely. She has only one suggestion to make—or rather two. He propounds them at some length. You explain that the adoption of either would necessitate the re-writing of the piece. "Well, better do that, my dear boy," he answers, "than have a failure. I'm only advising you for your own good." The producer does not agree with the manager's mother-in-law. His advice is: "Cut the other woman out altogether. Lighten the play and save a salary." He slips his arm through yours. "If it was only a question of art," he continues, in a friendly undertone, "I dare say you're right. Unfortunately, we've got to consider the great B.P. Now I've had twenty years' experience." Later on, the solicitor to the syndicate drops in and watches a rehearsal. He stumbles over the cat and reaches the stage. He has thought of an alteration that may save the play. The next afternoon, the stage-doorkeeper stops you on your way out. He also has been thinking the play over with the idea of helping you. They all know what the public want, and how to give it to them. It is everybody's secret, except the author's. I once overheard a producer talking to a friend concerning one of Barrie's plays.

"It was all no good," he was saying. "He wouldn't take my advice. Of course, the piece was successful—in a way. But think what it might have been!"

Over the play proper I had learnt to be firm; but I was young at producing, and I listened to George Hawtrey. He meant well. He was a dear fellow, in many respects. He always did mean well. He had discovered a genius made by the Creator on purpose to play our journalist. Partridge was my friend, he would not stand in the way of my making my fortune—of my making Phillpotts' fortune—of my making everybody's fortune. To cut a sad story short, I put it to Partridge, and, of course, he agreed. But he never forgave me; and I have always felt ashamed of myself for having done it.

COLLABORATION, generally speaking, is a mistake. As on the old tandem bicycle, each man thinks he is doing all the work. My first collaboration was with Addison Bright. We wrote a play for Miss Eastlake. I remember Bright's reading it to Wilson Barrett in his dressing-room at Birmingham after a performance of "Claudian." Barrett had not changed his costume, and came to us with two long hat-pins sticking out of each of his calves. Miss Eastlake had stuck them into him as she had followed him up the stairs. He never noticed them until he went to cross his legs. Miss Eastlake had a great sorrow in the first act, and the curtain went down on her sobbing her heart out. During rehearsals, she came forward for the second act still weeping. Bright explained to her that six years had elapsed, and that the stage directions were: "Enters talking and laughing."

"I know," she answered, the tears still falling down her cheeks. "I can't help it, it's so absurd of me. I'll never be able to get over it in time."

There was some risk of it, especially on the first night. To avoid danger we made the second act take place on the anniversary of her trouble, and gave her a "pensive" entrance.

It was in a play that I wrote for Annie Hughes that the telephone first appeared on the English stage. People talked about it and the critics said it was false realism. I wish now I hadn't done it. But maybe somebody else would have thought of it, if I hadn't.

I wrote three plays for Marie Tempest, two of which she never played in, and the third she wished she hadn't. It was her own fault. She wanted a serious play, and I gave her a serious play. She loved it when I read it to her. "Esther Castways" was the name of it. She was magnificent in it, and on the first night received an ovation. But, of course, the swells wouldn't have it. She had made a groove for herself, and her public were determined she should keep in it. We ought to have known that, all of us.

Lillah McCarthy gave me an insight into female psychology when she told me that the first thing she did with a new part was to dress it. She could not imagine how the woman would think and feel till she had visualized the clothes that she would wear. Then she began to understand the woman, working from the clothes inwards. I can understand: because The Stranger in "The Passing of the Third-Floor Back" came to me like that. I followed a stooping figure,

passing down a foggy street, pausing every now and then to glance up at a door. I did not see his face. It was his clothes that worried me. There was nothing out of the way about them. I could not make out why it was they seemed remarkable. I lost him at a corner, where the fog hung thick, and found myself wondering what he would have looked like if he had turned round and I had seen his face. I could not get him out of my mind, wandering about the winter streets, and gradually he grew out of those curious clothes of his.

The stage-doorkeeper also has been thinking the play over with the idea of helping you.

"Miss Hobbs" (or "The Kissing of Kate," to give the play its original title), produced by Charles Frohman in America with Annie Russell as Kate and wonderful old Mrs. Gilbert as Auntie, was my first real money-making success; if a gentleman may mention such a detail. She has been a good child to me, God bless her! The Princess Paulowa presented her in Russia and is now showing her round Italy. She was a great success in Germany. I was living in Dresden at the time; and the Kaiser sent me his congratulations, through an official of the Saxon Court, brought to me in a big envelope: so he couldn't have been all bad.

Rehearsals are trying periods. Everybody seems to be wearing their nerves outside their skin. The question whether the actor should take three steps to the right and pause with his left hand on the back of chair, centre, before proposing to the heroine, or whether he should do it from the hearthrug, with his left elbow on the mantelpiece, may threaten the friendship of a lifetime. The author wants him to do it from the hearthrug—is convinced that from there and there only can he convey to the heroine the depth and sincerity of his passion. The producer is positive that a true gentleman would walk round the top of the table and do it from behind a chair. The actor comes to the rescue. He "feels" he can do it only from the left-hand bottom corner of the table.

"Oh, well, if you feel as strongly about it as all that, my dear boy," says the producer, "that ends it. It's you who've got to play the part."

"Do you know," says the author, "I think he's right. It does seem to come better from there."

The rehearsal proceeds. Five minutes later, the argument whether a father would naturally curse his child before or after she has taken off her hat provides a new crisis.

In ancient times the fashion was for movement. The hero and heroine would be seated, making love, one each side of the piano. At the end of the first minute the stage manager, as he was then, would call out:—

"Now then, come along, my dears, break

it up. Put some life into it. You're not glued to those chairs, you know."

The hero and heroine would rise and change seats.

Nowadays the pendulum has swung too far the other way. I remember a rehearsal where the leading actress suddenly jumped up and began stamping about the stage.

"Whatever's the matter?" asked the producer.

"I'll be all right in a minute," she answered. "I've got pins and needles."

My own worst experience was over a musical play I wrote for Arthur Roberts, then with Lowenfeldt at the Prince of Wales. Lowenfeldt was an Austrian who had made a fortune out of Kops Ale. It was a popular temperance beverage twenty years ago, until the Revenue authorities discovered it contained more alcohol than the average public-house beer. His grievance against the London critics was that they didn't take cheques. I gathered from him that on the Continent they did. "Why not?" he argued. "A good notice in a respectable paper is worth a thousand pounds to me. I give the critic who writes it a hundred. It pays him, and it pays me." He thought the time would come.

Arthur Roberts took me aside.

"I want you to write me a part with a touch of pathos in it," he said. "You know what I mean. Plenty of fun, but not all fun. I want them to go home saying, 'Well, I always knew Arthur could make me laugh, but damned if I thought he had got it in him to make me cry.' See what I mean?"

I retired into the country and worked hard. It seemed to me an interesting story. There were moments in it when, if properly played, a chokey feeling would, I felt sure, manifest itself throughout the audience. But it all came right in the end. I made him a licensed victualler, of the better sort. An uncle had died and left him an hotel. He had not attended the reading. At the first rehearsal he took me aside. He said:—

"I've got an idea for this part. I'm a young farmer——" He gave me an imitation of a Somersetshire yokel. It was an excellent performance. "You know," he continued, "a simple Simon sort of part. In the second act——"

"But you can't, I said. "You're an hotel proprietor at Maidenhead."

"Good," he answered. "All you'll have to do is to knock out the hotel and call it a farm."

I tried reason, but he was just mad to be a farmer. He sketched out the part. It would be novel and amusing: I could see that. I sat up for a night or two and turned him into a farmer. We struggled through one or two rehearsals; and then he had another inspiration. He wanted to be a detective, disguised as an Italian waiter.

"Where's the difficulty?" he demanded. "Somebody steals the old girl's jewels. I'm in love with the daughter. The police are no good, I take the job on for her sake."

It meant re-writing half an act. I did it. Three days later he wanted to be a French Marquis, reduced to giving English lessons in Soho.

"Don't you see, my dear boy?" he explained. "Gives me an opportunity for pathos. I've been making them laugh, now I make them cry. Variety: that's the thing we want."

I never saw the play myself. I was told that he got them all in; and the critics spoke highly of his versatility. Adrian Ross (Arthur Ropes) took it off my hands and finished it. He was a wonderful worker. He would write a scene—quite a good scene—while Arthur Roberts walked up and down the room and acted it. The next morning Arthur had forgotten all about it, and Ropes would write him another.

I WROTE "The Passing of the Third-Floor Back" for David Warfield, an American actor. I worked it out first as a short story. It was John Murray, the publisher, who put the idea into my head of making it into a play; and when I saw Warfield in "The Music-Master," it seemed to me he was just the actor to play it. He would not have had the dignity and compelling force of Forbes-Robertson. He would have made the character win rather through tenderness and appeal. I was on a lecturing tour in America; and I got my agent, Miss Marbury, to put me into touch with Belasco, Warfield's manager. It was in a Pullman car between Washington and New York that I sketched out the idea to him. It got hold of him. We were both doubtful as to how the public would receive it. I thought I could do it without giving offence. Belasco agreed to trust me, and on my return to England I got to work upon it.

It was not an easy play to write: one had to feel it rather than think it. I was living in a lonely part of the Chiltern Hills, with great open spaces all around me, and that helped; and at last it was finished. I had arranged to return to America to produce "Sylvia of the Letters," a play I had written for Grace George; and I took "The Passing" with me. I read it to Warfield and Belasco late one night at Belasco's theatre in New York. We had the house to ourselves; and afterwards we adjourned to Warfield's club for supper. It was about

At the first rehearsal Arthur Roberts took me aside. "I've got an idea for this part. I'm a young farmer——"

three o'clock in the morning, and the only thing we could get was cold beef and pickles. They were both tremendously impressed, and we found ourselves talking in whispers. I fancy Belasco got nervous about it later on. We fixed things up next morning at Miss Marbury's office, and he asked me to see Percy Anderson, the artist, when I got back to England, and get him to make sketches for the characters. It was while he was drawing them, in his studio at Folkestone, that one morning Forbes-Robertson, who had a house there, dropped in upon him. Forbes was greatly interested in the sketches, and Anderson showed him the play.

Forbes-Robertson wrote me telling me this, and saying that, if by any chance arrangements between myself and Belasco fell through, he would like to talk to me. His letter arrived a day after I had had one from Belasco, making it clear that he did not want, if possible, to be bound to his contract; so, for answer, I called upon Forbes-Robertson in Bedford Square and read the play to him and his wife. He, too, was nervous, but Gertrude Elliott swept all doubts aside and ended the matter.

We got together as perfect a cast as I think any play has ever had. Ernest Hendrie as the old Bookmaker, Ian Robertson as the Major, Edward Sass as the Jew, Agnes Thomas as Mrs. Sharpe, and Haidee Wright as the Painted Lady were all wonderful; and Gertrude Elliott played the Slavey. I was afraid, at first, that her beauty and her grace would hamper her; but she overcame these drawbacks and, even at rehearsal, invested the little slut with a spirituality that at times transfigured her. My daughter played the part in the country and afterwards in London during the war, and these two were the best Stasias I have seen. Lillah McCarthy was to have played Vivien. Granville Barker was in America, and she consulted Shaw, who read the play and told her to grab the part and hang on to it. She had an engagement she thought she could get out of; but it was not so, and we had to seek elsewhere.

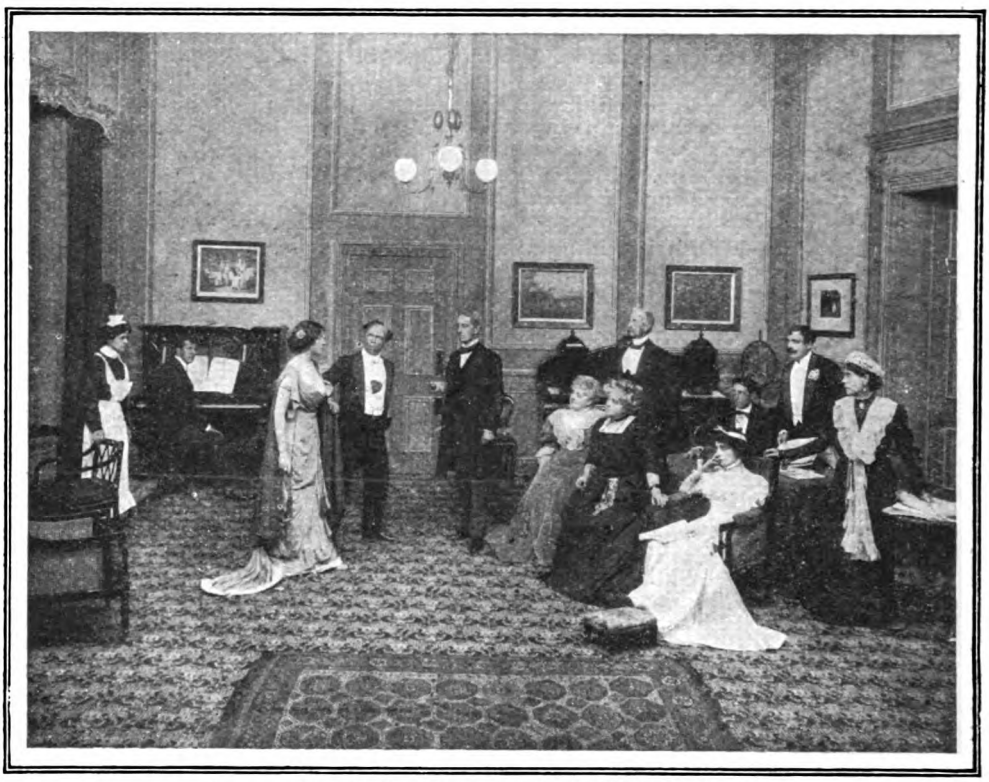
"We must have someone supremely beautiful," said Forbes-Robertson. "There are six women in the play; four of them have to be middle-aged, and my wife has to disguise herself; it's our only chance."

I thought of Alice Crawford. Time was pressing. We sent her a wire. She had just left for a ball at the Piccadilly Hotel.

"You must go to the ball," said Forbes.

I went as I was, in a blue serge suit, brown boots, and a collar that I had been wearing since eight o'clock in the morning. I made a sensation in the ballroom. I gathered that the people round about took me for a policeman in unnecessarily plain clothes; but I spotted Alice Crawford, and beckoned her outside. A gentleman came up and asked if he could be of any use. I take it the idea of bail was in his mind.

We produced the play at Harrogate. The audience there mistook it for a farce.



A scene from "The Passing of the Third-Floor Back."

Seated (left to right): Mr. Wilfred Forster, Miss Carlyon, Miss Bishop, Miss Haidee Wright, Mr. Marsh Allen.
Standing: Miss Gertrude Elliott, Miss Alice Crawford, Mr. Ernest Hendrie, Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, Mr. Ian Robertson, Mr. Edward Sass, Miss Agnes Thomas.

It was by the author of "Three Men in a Boat," so they had been told. That evening the Robertsons and myself partook of a melancholy supper. It was Blackpool that saved the play. Forbes wired me :—

"It's all right. Blackpool understands it and loves it."

In London, on the first night, the curtain fell to dead silence, which lasted so long that everybody thought the play must be a failure, and my wife began to cry. And then suddenly the cheering came, and my wife dried her eyes.

I was not present myself. I have shirked my own first nights ever since a play of mine that Willard produced at the Garrick. I thought the applause was unanimous, but was received with a burst of booing. The argument is that if an author is willing to be applauded, he must not object to being hissed. It may be logic, but it isn't sense : as well say that because a man does not mind being patted on the back, he ought not to object to being kicked. I remember the first night of one of Jones's plays. There was a difference of opinion, and Jones very properly did not appear. In the street I overheard some critics from the gallery talking.

"Why didn't he come out," said one, "and take his punishment like a man ?"

Forbes-Robertson was doubtful about taking the play to America. It was his sister-in-law, Maxime Elliott, who insisted. It was at her theatre in New York that he opened.

Mathieson Lang took it East. In China a most respectable mandarin came round to see him afterwards and thanked him.

"Had I been intending to do this night an evil deed," he said, "I could not have done it. I should have had to put it off until to-morrow."

(*To be continued.*)

The Beautiful Miss Hooper

By

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

THE trouble began, as where my pretty cousin is concerned it so often does, in a tea-shop.

"What are you doing this afternoon?" she had asked on the telephone.

"A whole heap of things," I had said. "As far as I can see, I shall be stuck here in the City till nearly seven."

It became obvious at once, though, that I couldn't see very far.

"But I *must* talk to you," said Audrey.

"You are," I pointed out.

"Don't be silly," said Audrey. "You know quite well what I mean. I shall expect you at the Smugglers' Cave at half-past four."

"I didn't quite catch that."

"Four-thirty," said Audrey, very distinctly. "At the Smugglers' Cave." And then, as though this made everything quite clear: "In Bond Street."

"But there isn't any——"

"Don't be an owl," she interrupted. "It's a new tea-shop."

"Oh!" I said. A very reasonable deduction followed. "Is anything wrong?" I asked. For though my pretty cousin is perpetually asking me to give her tea, she has never yet done so except in the hope that I would assist her out of some kind of difficulty.

"Yes," she said at once. "I can't possibly explain it on the telephone. But you will come along and help me, won't you?"

I put my hand quickly over the mouthpiece of my instrument, gave vent to a short groan, and removed it again.

"All right," I said. "Whereabouts in Bond Street?"

"This end."

"Yes, but where——"

"Oh, you can't possibly mistake it," she broke in impatiently. "You'll see a smuggler standing just outside. Don't be late, now. I'll tell you everything when I see you."

Then she rang off, leaving me to do the best I could to rearrange my afternoon's appointments, and in the intervals of this complicated task to wonder in what fresh trouble she had contrived to land herself. These occupations kept me fully employed until nearly a quarter-past four, but, as it was now pouring with rain, there was plenty of justification for taking a taxi.

"I want," I explained to the driver, "to go to a tea-shop in Bond Street called the Smugglers' Cave. Do you know it?"

He didn't know it.

"There's a smuggler standing outside," I added.

"A what, sir?"

"Oh, never mind. Just go along to Bond Street."

So we went along to Bond Street, but though we found a Backwoodsman shivering outside the Little Log Hut and a Beefeater dripping outside the Donjon Keep, there was no smuggler anywhere to be seen.

A police-constable, who is doubtless marked for rapid promotion, suggested that I might be looking for the Pirate's Den in Regent Street. At the moment, I fear, I was a little offhand in my reception of his ingenious gloss, but in the end I was compelled to put it to the test, and sure enough, as the Pirate stepped forward (under an umbrella) to open the door of my cab, I saw Audrey driving up from the other direction.

"Hullo!" she called out. "You're just in time to pay my taxi. Why are you so late?"

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I had a good enough answer, if only it hadn't been so wet. But before I could reproach her with her inaccuracy she had dashed across the pavement and disappeared. I paid off both cabs, and followed her into the little lift.

"Well?" I asked, as soon as we had been served with the usual chocolate and éclairs. "What's the matter now?"

She gave a vague kind of smile.

"I wonder," she said, "if they keep those Mont Blanc cakes here? I rather thought I saw——"

"Audrey!" I interrupted, sternly. "Please stick to the point. I'm asking you why you sent for me."

"Are you?" she said, and she was really looking quite her best. "Well, as a matter of fact, it was all a mistake—if you see what I mean."

"I don't. What was a mistake?"

"But I thought you'd be disappointed if I put you off. And, besides, just look at the weather."

"Do you mean to tell me——" I began, laboriously.

"There, there," said my pretty cousin. "Don't look so sulky. I really did want to see you most frightfully when I rang you up. I'd just had the most awful argument with father, but it's all smoothed itself out, and——"

She stopped abruptly, and as I looked up to discover the reason she gave me a sudden kick under the table.

"Wait a minute," she whispered urgently. "Don't look yet."

"Don't look at what?" I asked, with a mixture of annoyance and bewilderment.

"Hush!" she said, kicking me again. "Don't move till I tell you. Pretend to be talking to me. I don't want—— Now, then; quickly!"

I followed the direction of her eyes.

"That'll do," said my pretty cousin, plucking me by the sleeve. "But don't you think she's perfectly lovely?"

"Who?"

"Don't be so stupid. The girl in the corner there—behind the desk."

I looked again—taking the precaution to tuck my legs well under my chair first—and identified the alleged beauty. I am naturally one of the most courteous of my sex, but I also have a passion for honesty. I noted that the girl at the desk possessed hair of a peculiarly vivid shade of red, but I don't much care about red hair in any case, and the rest of her physique left me strangely unmoved.

"Frankly," I said, "I should call her distinctly plain. I'm sorry," I added, as Audrey fixed me with a glance of cold contempt. "It's quite possible that I'm wrong. I mean to say, it takes all sorts to make the world, and——"

"But her hair!" said my pretty cousin. "I'd give anything in the world to have hair like that."

"I prefer it as it is," I said.

"And her figure!" added my pretty cousin.

"I fail to detect it," I replied.

"How on earth a girl like that can stay cooped up in a tea-shop," said my pretty cousin; "how on earth she can sit there wasting her opportunities; how on——"

I AM afraid that at about this point my attention began to wander. There is always something a little jarring to me about one woman praising the appearance of another. It seems—well, perhaps "unnatural" is putting it too strongly; but in any case I found it easier not to listen. It is possible that I may have murmured some non-committal words of agreement, but I wasn't really thinking about the red-haired girl at all. I suppose—well, the fact is that I was really thinking about the shape of Audrey's nose. It is curious what a lot of thought can be given to this subject.

"Have another éclair," I said, presently.

"I couldn't," said Audrey, and she looked at her little wrist-watch. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed. "I'd no idea it was so late. I must rush back at once. We're all going to the opera to-night."

"Hard luck," I said, and then, as we both rose from our wicker chairs, I indulged in a certain permissible irony. "I'm glad," I observed, "to have been able to help you so much."

She gave the kind of smile which means that she recognizes that I am trying to be funny.

"Poor old thing," she said. "But you know you like having tea with me."

I couldn't deny it.

"I admit," I began, "that there are worse——"

She didn't hear me, though. She was staring once more at that confounded girl at the cash-desk.

"I *must* speak to her," she said, in a determined undertone. "Come and buy me some chocolates."

The pretext seemed, and was, quite unnecessary. But we approached the red-haired girl together, and having paid the piratical bill, I invited Audrey to make her selection from the stock of confectionery which was ranged in front of the desk.

"I'll have a pound of those," she said, perfunctorily.

"I'm sorry, miss," said the red-haired girl, with the ill-disguised pleasure which all shop-assistants show when they are

unable to sell you what you want, " but we've only got that little lot left." And then, " But I could send them to you to-morrow morning."

I looked furtively back, prepared to offer what assistance I could to the red-haired girl's embarrassment; but it was plain at once that I was the only embarrassed party present. The red-haired girl had flushed, it was true; but it was a flush of unmistakable pleasure.

" You really oughtn't to be shut up in a place like this," said my cousin. " I can't think why you don't go on the stage."

" All right," said Audrey. She dictated her name and address, while I made a further contribution to the pirate's hoard. And then, just as I thought it was all over and that her morbid curiosity was satisfied at last, she broke out with a rush of hastily-delivered speech.

" You must forgive me," she said, " but I can't help telling you how enormously I've been admiring your looks. In fact, I was just saying to my cousin here " (I looked quickly out of the window) " that you really oughtn't to be shut up in a place like this for another second. I can't think why you don't go on the stage."

" Oo ! " she said. " D'you reelly think so, miss ? "

" I do indeed," replied Audrey, quite carried away by her own enthusiasm. " If I were you, I shouldn't stay here another day. I'm sure any manager would simply jump at you."

She spoke with such conviction that it seemed useless for me to intervene with any statement as to how little she knew of theatrical managers and their jumping habits.

" Oo ! " said the red-haired girl again. " Oo, I say ! "

And here, with the very distinct know-

ledge that I had had enough of this dialogue, I caught hold of my pretty cousin by the arm and dragged her towards the lift. Our descent was accompanied by a brief but bitter argument, but, as usual, it was Audrey who had the last word.

"I don't care what you say," she told me, as we reached the pavement. "It's all rubbish to pretend you oughtn't to tell people that they're good-looking. The only thing in life is to say exactly what you think."

There were two openings for me here, but I let them both pass. Instead, I gave a short laugh.

"At least," I said, "you practise what you preach."

To my surprise, and also to my pleasure, she seemed quite touched.

"That's nice of you," she answered, though Heaven knows I hadn't meant to be nice. "And I feel I've been rather——"

"Oh, no. Not in the least," I said, quickly. We then exchanged a cousinly grasp of the hands, I saw her into a taxi, and after that I went off to the club and had a Turkish bath. By dinner-time the whole episode had passed from my mind.

IT was about twelve o'clock the next morning, when I was still struggling with the arrears of work which my visit to the Pirate's Den had involved, that the telephone on my table rang.

"Hullo?" I said, snatching at the receiver. And then, less fiercely: "Oh, hullo! Is that you?"

"Yes," said my pretty cousin's voice. "Are you frightfully busy?"

Surely I recognized that particular tone.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Have you and Uncle George had another——"

"Oh, no," she interrupted. "But—but the most awful thing's happened."

I dropped my fountain-pen, and it rolled on to the floor.

"Go on," I said, grimly.

"You remember that girl at the tea-shop?"

"What girl? Oh, yes; I remember."

I had no idea what was coming, but I held my breath.

"Well," said my pretty cousin, "she's here."

"Where?"

"In my sitting-room."

This was certainly strange, but, taken by itself, scarcely awful.

"But why?" I asked.

And then, indirectly and incoherently, out it all came. The red-haired girl had, it would appear, attached a significance to my pretty cousin's remarks which had never entered the speaker's head. She had tendered her notice to the Pirate's Den, had put on her best clothes, and was now sitting in Audrey's room—waiting to be given a part on the stage.

"And," concluded Audrey, "what on earth am I to do?"

Exactly. That was just the point.

"Well——" I began, slowly. But I got no farther.

"I suppose you couldn't come round and talk to me about it?" Audrey cut in.

I hedged.

"But how could I help?" I asked. "It wasn't I who——". I thought better of this, and substituted, "You must just tell her the truth. Explain that it's all a misunderstanding. Tell her to go back to the shop."

There was a moment's silence, and then:—

"But she can't," said my pretty cousin.

"Why not?"

"They've put another girl in her place."

"Oh!" I said. "Well——" I looked at my engagement-pad, at the letters on my table, and at my watch. "All right," I said, without enthusiasm. "I'll come round now."

AT this my pretty cousin called me a lamb, with which—since it is her highest form of praise—I tried to feel content. It was difficult, however, to pretend that we weren't in for one of the more disastrous of Audrey's messes. The more I thought of that red-haired girl's expression, the less I relished my approaching interview with her. The actual scene was no more encouraging than I had expected.

I am inclined to believe that the only occasion on which an idea had been forced into Miss Hooper's skull—for the girl's name, I discovered, was Daisy Hooper—had been on the previous afternoon, when Audrey had pictured her future as an actress. But once it had been driven into that remarkable substance, it was utterly impossible either to dislodge or to replace. I did once get her to say that she wouldn't mind if she didn't get a big part just at first, but with this admission her powers of receptivity seemed to close up for good. "Oo!" she would say, staring at me stupidly. Or, "Oo, yes;" or, "Oo, no." Otherwise she appeared to treat our conversation merely as a tiresome but necessary prelude to her coming theatrical triumphs. At the end of half an hour or so I made some transparent excuse, and returned to where Audrey was waiting outside on the stairs

"It's no good," I said, shaking my head wearily. "I've done my best, but we're exactly where we were before I started. She still thinks you're going to get her a

part, and it's my belief that she'll go on sitting in your room until you do."

"But I can't," said Audrey. "How can I?"

Her eyes grew very large as she looked at me, and I imagine it was because of this—I can think of no better excuse as I write—that I plunged still further into the morass.

"There are one or two actors that I meet at the club sometimes," I said. "I suppose I might——"

My pretty cousin clapped her hands.

"I knew you'd save me," she cried. "And I know she's a bit dull, but there must be lots of parts where they only want someone to look nice. And of course——"

My eyebrows shot upward.

"Do you mean to say," I interrupted, "that you still think that girl good-looking?"

"I think she's quite lovely," she answered, firmly. "Her hair alone——"

"Well, good-bye," I said, preparing to shake hands. "I must get back to the City, I'm afraid."

"But we've settled nothing. And, besides, I've ordered lunch for you."

I hesitated.

"And father and mother are both out."

I capitulated.

"Oh, well," I said; "in that case——"

"Of course," said Audrey, "we shall have to have Miss Hooper down too."

I SHOULD prefer not to describe that lunch. But there is no object in pretending that I derived any kind of pleasure from it. As soon as it was over I made my second, and successful, attempt to get back to my office, but Audrey followed me out into the hall, where she asked me to lend her five pounds.

"Mah-Jongg?" I asked, innocently.

"No," she said. "But Miss Hooper doesn't seem to have any relations, and she hasn't saved anything either. She must have something to pay her landlady with—while you're finding her a job."

"While I'm—— Oh, well, here you are. Take it."

My pretty cousin took it.

"And don't forget," she called down the front steps, "that I'm *relying* on you to settle it all up with your actor friends."

Friends? They had never been more than acquaintances at the best of times, and even this slight link must, I felt, be shattered if subjected to the intolerable strain of Miss Daisy Hooper. However—— I squared my shoulders, hailed another taxi, and returned once more to my interrupted work.

There followed a period in my life on which I still look back with feelings of discomfort and horror. Armed with a set of photographs of Miss Hooper—taken by Audrey's pet photographer and paid for by me—I did approach what I had previously called "the mummers' table" at my club. Unfortunately, though, two of the mummers were out of work themselves, and with their sensitive, artistic natures seemed to take my half-hearted inquiries as a thinly-disguised insult. We have not yet resumed our former relationship. The third professional gentleman, rendered light-hearted by his temporary connection with a success, chose to make insinuations which—well, the less said about them the better. He had, of course, no shadow of justification, and richly deserved the dignified reproof which I administered to him; but it was obvious that in protecting my fair name I was automatically removing him from the list of possible helpers. We parted with some coolness, and gathering up the photographs—which in the course of our argument had become slightly crumpled—I went downstairs to the telephone boxes and turned in my report.

"I'm awfully sorry, Audrey," I said; "but as far as the club goes I seem to have drawn a blank. I think it's Miss Hooper's turn now."

There was silence at the other end of the line.

"If you don't mind my saying so," I added.

The silence continued, though I was certain that we hadn't been cut off.

"How *is* Miss Hooper?" I asked.

For some reason this question seemed to provoke my pretty cousin. I gathered from her reply that Miss Hooper's resemblance to the Old Man of the Sea was increasing with every moment that passed, but I was given no information as to the state of her health.

"Something's got to be done, though," added my pretty cousin. "You see that, don't you?"

This time it was my turn to remain silent.

"Aren't there people called agents," she added suddenly, "who get you jobs at theatres?"

I answered, not very hopefully, that I believed this was the case.

"Then you'd better try some of them," she said.

"Will you come with me if I do?" I asked.

She considered this for a moment.

"All right," she answered. "And I'll bring Miss Hooper with me. After all, you get no idea of her colouring from those photographs."

"True," I said. And after I had apologized for this harmless word, we agreed to

make a combined attack on the agents on the following morning.

The results were exhausting, expensive, and negative. If there is one thing that I dislike more than another, it is waiting in a queue. Yet this is how we must have spent four-fifths of that unspeakable day. A further fraction was employed in driving from one office to another, and a space must also be set aside for the lunch which I was called on to provide. By tea-time, when we decided to knock off, I had disbursed eight guineas in "booking fees," but the nearest we had come to achieving anything was at the establishment of a certain Mr. Aarons, who had offered Audrey an engagement in the chorus of a touring revue. She blamed me bitterly afterwards because I hadn't knocked him down.

"It looks to me," I couldn't help saying, when at last we drove away from Miss Hooper's lodgings, "as though we'd got that girl on our hands for life."

"Nonsense," said Audrey. "It's so like you to say a thing like that."

"I'm simply saying," I pointed out, "what I believe to be a fact. And if you ask me, the only sensible thing to do is to try and get her back into the Pirate's Den. She can't help being a born fool, but at least they put up with her there before."

"Rubbish," said Audrey. "She can't possibly go on wasting her time in a place like that."

It occurred to me to suggest that it was better to waste one person's time than three. But we were both a little on edge, and I didn't want to begin a real quarrel.

"Well, we must just wait," I said. "Perhaps, after all, one of those agents will find her something. You never know."

"Her hair alone——" began Audrey once more. But at this moment, luckily, our taxi-driver tried to take the wrong turning, and as I had to lean out of the window to set him right, her sentence was never finished.

WE separated in a subdued manner, and without—for once—making any plan for our next assignation. The shadow of the ineffable Miss Hooper had darkened both our young lives, and though I would now, more than ever, have done anything in my power to get rid of that half-witted incubus, I felt that I had shot my last bolt. Not only, as I had said, were we landed with her for life, but as far as I could see she was going to be a perpetual and insufferable adjunct at all my meetings with my prettiest of cousins. I passed a very depressing evening in the smoking-room of my club, and slept extremely badly when I got back to my flat.

And then in the morning, as though things weren't black enough, I received a communication from my Aunt Clara—Audrey's mother—which came dangerously near causing me to burst a blood-vessel. I don't know what Audrey had told her—for in any case there is a vast difference between what one tells my Aunt Clara and what she understands—and her letter was, as always, both rambling and confused. But the general drift was only too clear. I was accused of introducing Audrey, with whose inexperience I was alleged to be familiar, to unsuitable companions. "I am sure," wrote my Aunt Clara, "that your interest in Miss Hooper does you every credit, but I really think that for the time being, and I am sure your uncle would say the same, it would be better if——" And so on. In other words, I was supposed to choose between my pretty cousin and her—not my—confounded *protégée*. But this choice was mere illusion. It simply didn't exist. If I abandoned Miss Hooper (which I would have done with more pleasure than I can describe), I should also cut myself off from Audrey. If I stuck to Audrey, then there at once was Miss Hooper. For I knew something, you see, about my pretty cousin's sense of loyalty.

YET if I tried to explain the situation to Aunt Clara—— No, that was more impossible still. Supposing she asked who was paying Miss Hooper's landlady?

"The position," I told myself, "is most decidedly ticklish. It requires thought." And the result of this thought, which was spread over several days and had the most deplorable effect on my ordinary work, was that I returned to the Pirate's Den and secured an interview with the manageress.

I was long past caring what she thought or imagined. All I wanted to know were the terms on which she was prepared to take Miss Hooper back. And—for when Audrey isn't with me I really don't do these things so badly—I did eventually succeed in nailing her down. There was to be a cash transaction, a form of blackmail which was supposed to compensate the manageress for the quite imaginary disorganization of her business, but on the strength of this I was to receive a written undertaking that Miss Hooper should be restored to her cash-desk. An immeasurable weight seemed to be lifted from my soul. I wrote out my cheque there and then, and, with the manageress's promise safe in my pocket, I tore off to the nearest telephone.

"Audrey!" I cried excitedly, as soon as she answered me. "It's all right about that Hooper girl. I——"

And at this point my Uncle George came mooning across the drawing-room, and wanted to know what we were muttering about.

"What?" she interrupted. "Who told you?"

"Who told me what?"

"Isn't it splendid?" she exclaimed. "I knew we'd pull it off in the end."

I felt decidedly uneasy.

"Pull what off?" I asked.

"Oh," said my pretty cousin, "I thought you must have heard. That nice little Mr. Aarons has got her a part. She's to start rehearsing to-morrow."

The receiver nearly fell out of my hand.

"You actually mean to say——" I gasped. "You mean to tell me that—— Why, it's impossible."

My pretty cousin laughed.

"Who was right?" she demanded.

I paid no attention to this question.

"But what sort of a part?" I asked. "Has she got to say anything?"

"We don't know yet," said Audrey. "You mustn't be so impatient."

I wasn't impatient. I was merely cursing myself for having given that cheque to the Pirate's Den. And yet—well, I wouldn't tear up the manageress's letter just yet. In spite of Mr. Aarons's triumph, I still somehow couldn't see Miss Hooper as a second Mrs. Siddons. I might be wrong, of course. The public taste was notoriously capricious and uncertain. However, I stuck to that letter, and said nothing about it to Audrey.

A few days later my Aunt Clara suddenly invited me to dinner. I accepted with alacrity, seeing in this a sign that she had swallowed the long-winded and unconvincing explanation which I had sent her, and that my character was restored in her eyes. She was friendliness itself, and even went so far as to say that as long as Miss Hooper stopped coming to the house she wished her nothing but good. I understood from this that Miss Hooper *had* stopped coming to the house, and at the first opportunity for private conversation I asked my pretty cousin if such were the case.

"Yes," she said. "She's so busy rehearsing that she hasn't had time. But," she added, "of course I still see her."

"And is she satisfied with her part?" I asked.

"Yes," said Audrey. "She says it's very hard work, but she's sure she's going to make a big hit."

"Have you—er—gathered any details about the play?"

"Well, no," said Audrey, frankly. "She did try to explain it to me, that is; but she's not very good at describing things."

"Oh!" I said. And at this point my Uncle George came mooning across the drawing-room, and wanted to know what we were muttering about.

"I was talking about Miss Hooper, father," said my pretty cousin. "You know her play's starting on Monday night."

"Eh?" said Uncle George, looking at me with ponderous archness. "Your little friend? Well, I think we ought all to go and give her a good send-off."

"I'm engaged that evening," I said, quickly. But it was no use. Audrey had clapped her hands with delight, and before any of us knew where we were the whole thing was settled. "And you'll get the

"I call it disgraceful," she said. "We've come all this way to see that girl act, and——"
"Sh!" said my Uncle George.

tickets," she ended, sweeping me headlong into the plan.

"Very well," I answered, resignedly. "What's the theatre?"

"The Olympic," she replied.

"To the best of my knowledge," I said, "the Olympic was pulled down about thirty years ago. Are you sure there's no mistake?"

"Don't be an owl," said my pretty cousin. "The one I'm talking about is somewhere the other side of the river. But you needn't turn up your nose," she added, "because they're all coming to London next month."

"Then couldn't we wait——" I began. But of course this was no use either. My pretty cousin wouldn't hear of it.

AND so, after some difficulty, I ran the Olympic Theatre to earth, and having discovered that it offered two performances—at six-fifteen and eight-forty-five—I booked four stalls for the opening house, since it seemed to me that this would, strictly speaking, be Miss Hooper's actual *première*. The result was that we had to have dinner shortly after five. My uncle and aunt both appeared in evening dress, though Audrey—who has moments of sanity—was much more non-committal in her attire. For myself, it had never even occurred to me to change, and I remember that Uncle George used this as a text for one of his well-known onslaughts on the slackness of the younger generation.

I suffered this in silence, and while they were getting ready to start I hastily telephoned to the Olympic and tried to change my four stalls for a box—for I was a little nervous of the impression which my party might make on the rest of the audience.

The attempt was only a partial success. I secured the box, but I had to stick to the stalls as well. It seemed that there was a local prejudice against exchanging seats at the Olympic, and after I had sampled the performance I could well understand how it had arisen.

So we all drove off, along miles and miles of tram-line, while Uncle George continued to banter me on my supposed interest in Miss Hooper, and Audrey looked out of the window and dreamt—I felt certain—of the reflected glory which would so shortly be hers. Aunt Clara said it was wonderful how all these poor people managed to live so far away from everything. She stared at them almost as openly as they stared at her.

Then we got to the theatre, and were shown into our box. I bought three programmes, and as I handed the first to Aunt Clara, I was alarmed to see her gasp and turn pale.

"But," she said, looking at me accusingly, 'this is a music-hall!"

I was a bit surprised myself, and looked at Audrey for assistance. For once she didn't let me down.

"Nonsense, mother," she said. "It's a variety theatre."

"That's right," I agreed heartily. "And look," I added, pointing to the programme. "They've got several one-act plays. I expect Miss Hooper is in one of them."

My Aunt Clara closed her eyes.

"If there is any vulgarity," she began, "or if there are any performing animals——" But here the overture broke out with such an appalling din that all conversation became impossible. We settled ourselves in our chairs, and prepared to be entertained.

I have already hinted that the quality of the performance was poor, and as I have to get on with my story, I propose to leave it at that. Much as I am tempted to add that it was dreary, imbecile, cacophonous, and soul-destroying, I have neither time nor space for such criticisms. The main point is that we continued to sit it out, and that Miss Hooper was still withheld from our eager eyes. I was beginning to wonder whether we hadn't come to the wrong place, but Audrey refused to be shaken.

"It's all right," she said. "I expect she'll be on in the next sketch."

But she wasn't. At about half-past seven the curtain rose on the Great Merlin—a pale gentleman in evening dress, who appeared in the company of a large wooden box, and with the cuffs of his coat rolled well back. From the general evidence at my disposal I took him to be a conjurer, and it wasn't long before this theory was confirmed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Great Merlin, stepping forward, "I have much pleasure in introducing to your notice this evening, for the first time on any stage, my new illusion, which I have taken the liberty of calling 'The Astaounding Cabinet.'" He ran on like this for some time, in a vein which was singularly free from false modesty, and concluded by inviting any four members of the audience to come up on to the stage, "to see that my apparatus is entirely free from 'anky-panky."

I missed the next few moments, for I was resisting my pretty cousin's efforts to make me take advantage of this invitation. When I looked round again, the Great Merlin had secured his quorum, and they were busily engaged in staring at the Astounding Cabinet.

THE GREAT MERLIN then proceeded to indicate the general outline of his trick. He was going to ask any young lady to come up out of the auditorium, and to enter the cabinet. He then proposed to pass no fewer than twenty-four steel rods through the holes which we would observe in the sides, back, and front of the cabinet, after which he would withdraw the same, open the cabinet, and restore the young lady to her friends. It says much for the confidence which he had inspired that there was no protest against the apparent danger of this experiment. Somehow or other I think we all felt that the young lady was not really going to suffer.

"Naow, then!" said the Great Merlin, raking the audience with a slightly roguish eye. He was rewarded with a few stifled giggles, but the victim still failed to present herself.

"What?" said the Great Merlin. "Are you frightened of all these good-looking gentlemen on the stage?" This got him a laugh. "They're not as wild as they look." Another laugh—except, of course, from the objects of his mockery. And then: "Ah! Thank you, miss. I can see *you're* not afraid of the dark."

And up, over the footlights, came Miss Daisy Hooper.

At the same moment I felt a violent grab at my arm.

"But," protested my pretty cousin, in a horrified whisper, "he's cheating! Don't you understand? *This* is what she's been rehearsing. She's his accomplice!"

"Quite," I murmured. And I couldn't help congratulating the Great Merlin on his choice of conspirator. If there were one woman in Great Britain who could pass through that Astounding Cabinet without being able to explain afterwards how the trick was done, her name was undoubtedly Hooper. But Audrey didn't take it like this.

"I call it disgraceful," she said. "We've come all this way to see that girl act, and——"

"Sh!" said my Uncle George.

Poor Audrey! It *was* a bit disappointing for her, after all the trouble she'd taken. And yet, if you came to think of it, could one deny that Miss Hooper was playing a part?

"After all——" I began. But Uncle George silenced me at once. The veins were positively starting from his forehead in his determination to pierce the mystery of the Astounding Cabinet.

A uniformed subordinate had now appeared on the stage, bringing with him the twenty-four steel rods. The four scrutineers were asked to count these and to show, by clashing them violently together, that they were indeed made of metal. The climax of the illusion was obviously approaching.

The Great Merlin rolled up his sleeves still further, and, selecting the first rod, passed it through the first set of holes. I noticed that it seemed rather a tight fit, but I took this to be an artful scheme for heightening the general interest.

"One," said the Great Merlin; and he picked up the second rod.

"Two," he added, plunging it impetuously into the next slot. And as he did so there came a piercing shriek from the inside of the cabinet.

"*Oo!*" cried a female voice, which I had no difficulty in recognizing. "Oo, stop it! Oo, you're hurting me!"

There was a gust of laughter from the gallery, and beads of sweat broke out on the Great Merlin's brow. It was touch and go, I felt, as he snatched up the third rod and jabbed it fiercely through the door.

There was a loud thump from within, another faint "Oo!"—and the rod bounced back on to the carpet.

And then, as far as one could judge, panic must have seized the unfortunate Miss Hooper. The whole cabinet rocked and staggered as she fought for the secret exit. The Great Merlin danced about in front of it, beseeching us all to remain calm. But shouts, yells, and cat-calls were the only reply. "Let the pore girl out!" cried angry voices. A humorist in the grand circle started throwing down halfpennies, and was at once followed by numerous imitators. My last glimpse of the stage, as the curtain began to fall, showed the four committee-men—abandoning all pretence at neutrality—seizing up the Astounding Cabinet and carting it off into the wings. Then, as the uproar continued to fill the Olympic Theatre, I rose hastily from my seat.

"Is that the end?" asked Aunt Clara, looking a little puzzled.

"Yes," I said. "Come on."

SO we made our escape, and by the mercy of Providence there was a taxi on the rank outside. I handed my three relations in, gave the address of their house, and slammed the door.

Then, as the taxi drove away, I once more squared my shoulders, drew a deep breath, and plunged down the dimly-lit side-street towards the stage entrance. As I ran along, I was taking that piratical manageress's letter from my pocket.

"And now," I said, the next afternoon, as I finished telling Audrey of the successful end of the adventure, "I don't propose to refer to the subject again. But," I added, "there's just one question that's got to be cleared up."

My pretty cousin, who never looks prettier than in one of her rare moods of contrition, raised her eyes.

"What is it?" she asked, gently.

"Can you," I demanded, "still look me in the face and tell me that that girl was even passably good-looking?"

A slow, mischievous smile spread over her features.

"You ought to know by now," she answered, "that I'm not quite as blind as all that."

"Then why—— "

'Oh, well," she said, getting up suddenly. "Seeing how I'd dragged you all the way from your office that day on a false alarm, I had to say *something* to amuse you, didn't I? And once I'd started——"

"Audrey!" I gasped. "You—you little——"

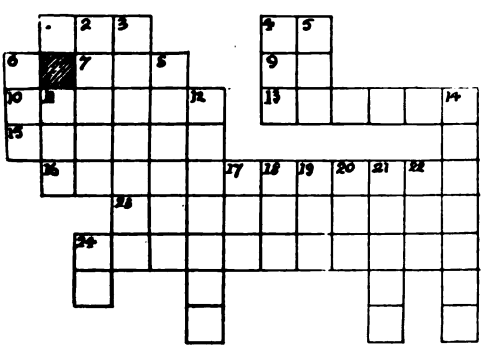
The latch of the drawing-room door clicked, and I stopped myself just in time. It was my dear Uncle George again—back from his card-playing at the club.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

757.—THE BRITISH LION.

JUST one more Cross-word curiosity while the craze is with us. I give only one blacked out square—the



Lion's eye. All the other squares have to be filled. DEFINITIONS. HORIZONTALS: 1. A number. 4. Location. 7. An animal. 9. That is. 10. A favourite dish with Scotsmen. 13. A madman. 15. To check. 16. One at home with the world. 23. Dependents. 24. Definite. VERTICALS: 2. A black man. 3. The letters of "EEL PEGS" in disorder. 4. Object. 5. A beverage. 6. An exclamation. 8. Fate, destiny. 11. Where St. Joan came from. 12. Those who throw stones. 14. Agreement. 17. A postscript with initial. 18. Two vowels followed by a consonant. 19. A joint of mutton or pork curtailed. 20. For travellers. 21. To worry. 22. Dexterity. 24. Perform.

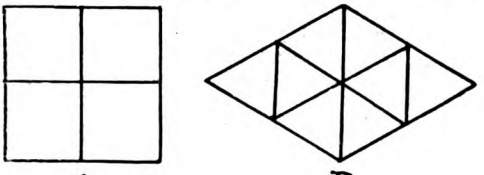
758.—DE MORGAN AND ANOTHER.

AUGUSTUS DE MORGAN, the mathematician, who died in 1871, used to boast that he was x years old in the year x^2. My living friend, Jasper Jenkins, wishing to improve on this, tells me that he was $a^2 + b^2$ in $a^4 + b^4$; that he was 2 m in the year $2\,m^2$; and that he was 3 n years old in the year $3\,n^4$. Can you give the years in which De Morgan and Jenkins were respectively born?

759.—THE DONJON KEEP WINDOW.

IN my book, "The Canterbury Puzzles," Sir Hugh de Fortibus calls his chief builder and, pointing to a

window, says, " Methinks yon window is square, and measures, on the inside, one foot every way, and is divided by the narrow bars into four lights, measuring



A B

half a foot on every side." See our Figure A. " I desire that another window be made higher up whose four sides shall also be each one foot, but it shall be divided by bars into eight lights, whose sides shall be all equal." This the craftsman was unable to do, so Sir Hugh showed him our figure B, which is quite correct. But he added, " I did not tell thee that the window must be square, as it is most certain it never could be."

Now, an ingenious correspondent, Mr. George Plant, has found a flaw in Sir Hugh's conditions. Something that was understood is not actually stated, and the window may, as the conditions stand, be perfectly square. How is it to be done ?

760.—THE TWO DIGITS.

WRITE down any two-figure number (different figures and no 0) and then express that number by writing the same figures in reverse order, with or without arithmetical signs. For example, $45 = 5 \times 9$ would be correct if only the 9 had happened to be a 4. Or $81 = (1 + 8)^2$ would do, except for the fact that it introduces a third figure—the 2. So far I have only found two solutions, but readers may discover others.

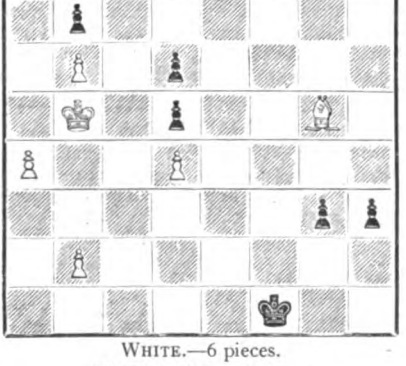
761.—MISSING WORDS.

No reckless . . . . . of the sword,
He . . . . . his fatherland to save,
Fighting for freedom, not . . . .
Now . . . . . of the eastern wave.

Each of the four missing words contains the same six letters.

762.—A CHESS ENDING.

BLACK.—6 pieces.



WHITE.—6 pieces.

White to play and draw.

IT often happens, in a game of chess, that a player will too hastily resign, when he might have drawn or even won had he only been able to discover the way. Here is a remarkable ending, by J. G. Campbell. Most players would immediately resign, as White, because nothing can prevent Black queening one of his pawns. And yet a draw is possible in a very few moves.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

753.—ANOTHER CROSS-WORD VARIANT.

B	E	E	C	H		B	A	K	E	R
A			O	A	T	E	N			I
S	W			M	A	T			D	V
L	I	T		S	P	A		R	O	E
E	N	O	W				S	E	E	N
		P	O				H	A		
W	R	E	N				E	P	I	C
A	I	R		G	A	S		S	L	Y
L	B			L	I	P			K	C
L			G	A	T	E	S			L
S	W	O	R	D		D	R	A	K	E

THE reader will have no difficulty in fitting all the words to the definitions.

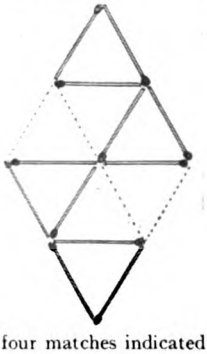
754.—THE FLY AND THE MOTOR-CARS.

(1) THE fly meets car B in 1 hr. 48 min. (2) There is no necessity here to work out the distance that the fly travels—a difficult series for the novice. We simply find that the cars meet in exactly 2 hrs.! The fly really travels in miles $\frac{270}{1} + \frac{270}{10} + \frac{270}{100} + \frac{270}{1000} \ldots$ to infinity, and the sum of this geometrical decreasing series is exactly 300 miles.

755.—DOUBLE-BARRELLED CONUNDRUMS.

THE difference between the King and the North Star is 19s. $11\frac{1}{2}$d., because one is a sovereign and the other a far thing. As for the other conundrum, surely you have heard of a larkspur!

756.—A LITTLE MATCH PUZZLE.



REMOVE the four matches indicated by the dotted lines and the remainder form four equal triangles.

SUMMER FICTION NUMBER

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

"The Land of Mist"
BY
A. CONAN DOYLE

GILBERT FRANKAU
E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM
JEROME K. JEROME

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for August, 1925.

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Frontispiece : The circle of wood, in the full light of the candle, rose upon edge and stood there shaking, as if trying to keep its balance.

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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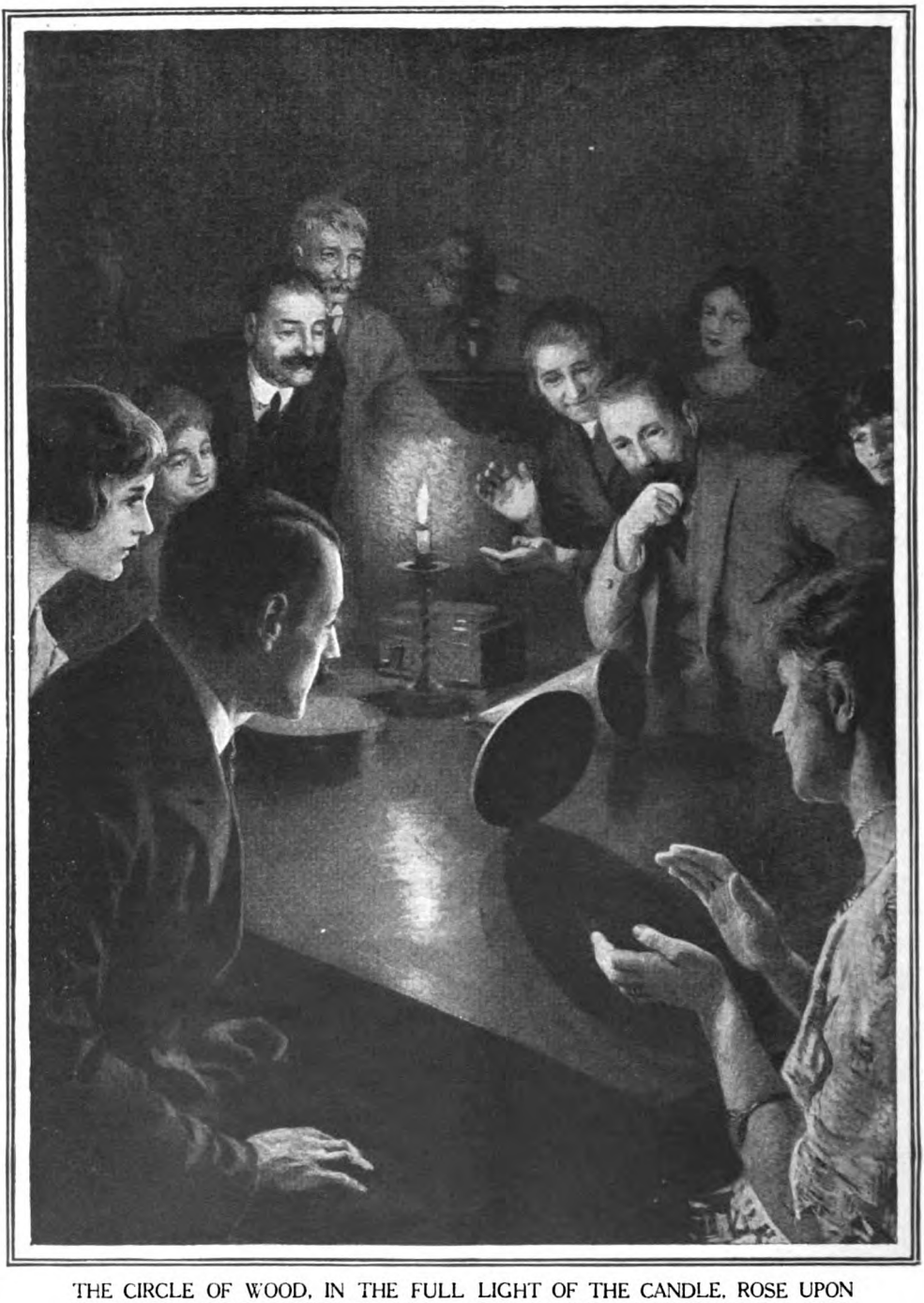

THE CIRCLE OF WOOD, IN THE FULL LIGHT OF THE CANDLE, ROSE UPON EDGE AND STOOD THERE SHAKING, AS IF TRYING TO KEEP ITS BALANCE.

(See page 122.)

The Land of Mist

OR

THE QUEST OF EDWARD MALONE

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

This month we publish the second instalment of a serial which will, we venture to say, attract world-wide interest. It deals with the borderland of human knowledge and experience which fades away into "The Land of Mist."

Whether one agrees or disagrees, it is an undoubted fact that psychic questions are before the world at present as they have never been before. It will also be admitted that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can claim an almost unique experience in such matters, having studied them for thirty-six years. In this story he paints with a full brush both the weakness and the strength of the movement. The false medium is drawn with a relentless accuracy. Many of the almost incredible scenes and incidents which he depicts have, he assures us, either occurred to himself or to those whose testimony cannot be doubted. We venture to think that, whatever are the conclusions of the public, they will be amazed at the adventures which are still to be encountered in this workaday world.

The first instalment gave an intensely interesting description of a visit to a Spiritualist church by Edward Malone and Enid Challenger, the Joint Commissioners of "The Daily Gazette." Later, in his flat, her father, the famous Professor Challenger, receives their account with a storm of ridicule and contempt.

IV.

IN WHICH MR. BOLSOVER GIVES AN INVITATION.

THE article by the Joint Commissioners (such was their glorious title) aroused interest and contention. It had been accompanied by a depreciating leaderette from the sub-editor, which was meant to calm the susceptibilities of his orthodox readers, as who should say: "These things have to be noticed and seem to be true, but, of course, you and I recognize how pestilential it all is." Malone found himself at once plunged into a huge correspondence for and against, which in itself was enough to show how vitally the question was in the minds of men. All the previous articles had only elicited a growl here or there from a stern stickler for conventional orthodoxy, but now his post-bag was full. Most of the letters were ridiculing the idea that psychic forces existed, and many were from writers who, whatever they might know of psychic forces, had obviously not yet learned to spell. The Spiritualists were in many cases not more pleased than the others, for Malone had—even while his account was true—exercised a journalist's privilege of laying an accent on the more humorous sides of it.

One morning in the succeeding week Mr. Malone was aware of a large presence in the small room wherein he did his work at the office. A page-boy who preceded the stout visitor had laid a card on the corner of the table, which bore the legend: "James Bolsover, Provision Merchant, High Street,

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Hammersmith." It was none other than the genial President of last Sunday's congregation. He wagged a paper accusingly at Malone, but his good-humoured face was wreathed in smiles.

"Well, well," said he. "I told you that the funny side would get you."

"Don't you think it a fair account?"

"Well, yes, Mr. Malone, I think you and the young woman have done your best for us. But, of course, you know nothing, and it all seems queer to you. Come to think of it, it would be a deal queerer if all the clever men who leave this earth could not among them find some way of getting a word back to us."

"But it's such a stupid word sometimes."

"Well, there are a lot of stupid people leave the world. They don't change. And then, you know, one never knows what sort of message is needed. We had a clergyman in to see Mrs. Debbs yesterday. He was broken-hearted because he had lost his daughter. Mrs. Debbs got several messages through that she was happy and that only his grief hurt her. 'That's no use,' said he. 'Anyone could say that. That's not my girl.' And then suddenly she said: But I wish to goodness you would not wear a Roman collar with a coloured shirt.' That sounded a trivial message, but the man began to cry. 'That's her,' he sobbed. 'She was always chipping me about my collars.' It's the little things that count in this life—just the homely, intimate things, Mr. Malone."

Malone shook his head.

"Anyone would remark on a coloured shirt and a clerical collar."

Mr. Bolsover laughed. "You're a hard proposition. So was I once, so I can't blame you. But I called here with a purpose. I expect you are a busy man and I know that I am, so I'll get down to the brass tacks. First, I wanted to say that all our people that have any sense are pleased with the article. Mr. Algernon Mailey wrote me that it would do good, and if he is pleased, we are all pleased."

"Mailey, the barrister?"

"Mailey, the religious reformer. That's how he will be known."

"Well, what else?"

"Only that we would help you if you and the young lady wanted to go further in the matter. Not for publicity, mind you, but just for your own good—though we don't shrink from publicity, either. I have physical phenomena séances at my own home without a professional medium, and if you would like——"

"There's nothing I would like so much."

"Then you shall come—both of you. I don't have many outsiders. I wouldn't have one of those psychic research people inside my doors. Why should I go out of my way to be insulted by all their suspicions and their traps? They seem to think that folk have no feelings. But you have some ordinary common sense. That's all we ask."

"But I don't believe. Would that not stand in the way?"

"Not in the least. So long as you are fair-minded and don't disturb the conditions, all is well. Spirits out of the body don't like disagreeable people any more than spirits in the body do. Be gentle and civil, same as you would to any other company."

"Well, I can promise that."

"They are funny sometimes," said Mr. Bolsover, in reminiscent vein. "It is as well to keep on the right side of them. They are not allowed to hurt humans, but we all do things we're not allowed to do, and they are very human themselves. You remember how *The Times* correspondent got his head cut open with the tambourine in one of the Davenport brother séances? Very wrong, of course, but it happened. No friend ever got his head cut open. There was another case down Stepney way. A money-lender went to a séance. Some victim that he had driven to suicide got into the medium. He got the moneylender by the throat and it was a close thing for his life. But I'm off, Mr. Malone. We sit once a week, and have done for four years without a break. Eight o'clock Thursdays. Give us a day's notice and I'll get Mr. Mailey to meet you. He can answer questions better than I. Next Thursday! Very good." And Mr. Bolsover lurched out of the room.

Both Malone and Enid Challenger had, perhaps, been more shaken by their short experience than they had admitted, but both were sensible people who agreed that every possible natural cause should be exhausted—and very thoroughly exhausted—before the bounds of what is possible should be enlarged. Both of them had the utmost respect for the ponderous intellect of Challenger and were affected by his strong views, though Malone was compelled to admit in the frequent arguments in which he was plunged that the opinion of a clever man who has had no experience is really of less value than that of the man in the street who has actually been there.

These arguments, as often as not, were with Marvin, editor of the psychic paper *Dawn*, which dealt with every phase of the occult, from the lore of the Rosicrucians to the strange religions of the students of the Great Pyramid, or of those who uphold the Jewish origin of our blond Anglo-Saxons. Marvin was a small, eager man with a brain of a high order, which might have carried him to the most lucrative

heights of his profession had he not determined to sacrifice worldly prospects in order to help what seemed to him to be a great truth. As Malone was eager for knowledge and Marvin was equally keen to impart it, the waiters at the Literary Club found it no easy matter to get them away from the corner-table in the window at which they were wont to lunch. Looking down at the long grey curve of the Embankment and the noble river with its vista of bridges, the pair would linger over their coffee, smoking cigarettes and discussing various sides of this most gigantic and absorbing subject, which seemed already to have disclosed new horizons to the mind of Malone.

There was one warning given by Marvin which aroused impatience amounting almost to anger in Malone's mind. He had the hereditary Irish objection to coercion, and it seemed to him to be appearing once more in an insidious and particularly objectionable form.

"You are going to one of Bolsover's family séances," said Marvin. "They are, of course, well known among our people, though few have been actually admitted, so you may consider yourself privileged. He has clearly taken a fancy to you."

"He thought I wrote fairly about them."

"Well, it wasn't much of an article, but still, among the dreary, purblind nonsense that assails us it did show some traces of dignity and balance and sense of proportion."

Malone waved a deprecating cigarette.

"Bolsover's séances and others like them are, of course, things of no moment to the real psychic. They are like the rude foundations of a building, which certainly help to sustain the edifice, but are forgotten when once you come to inhabit it. It is the higher superstructure with which we have to do. You would think that the physical phenomena were the whole subject—those and a fringe of ghosts and haunted houses—if you were to believe the cheap papers which cater for the sensationalist. Of course, these physical phenomena have a use of their own. They rivet the attention of the inquirer and encourage him to go farther. Personally, having seen them all, I would not go across the road to see them again. But I would go across many roads to get high messages from the beyond."

"Yes, I quite appreciate the distinction, looking at it from your point of view. Personally, of course, I am equally agnostic as to the messages and the phenomena."

"Quite so. St. Paul was a good psychic. He makes the point so neatly that even his ignorant translators were unable to disguise the real occult meaning, as they have succeeded in doing in so many cases."

"Can you quote it?"

"I know my New Testament pretty well, but I am not letter-perfect. It is the passage where he says that the gift of tongues, which was an obvious sensational thing, was for the uninstructed, but that prophecies—that is, real spiritual messages—were for the elect. In other words, that an experienced Spiritualist has no need of phenomena."

"I'll look that passage up."

"You will find it in Corinthians, I think. By the way, there must have been a pretty high average of intelligence among these old congregations if Paul's letters could have been read aloud to them and thoroughly comprehended."

"That is generally admitted, is it not?"

"Well, it is a concrete example of it. However, I am down a side-track. What I wanted to say to you is that you must not take Bolsover's little spirit circus too seriously. It is honest as far as it goes, but it goes a mighty short way. It's a disease, this phenomena hunting. I know some of our people, women mostly, who buzz around séance rooms continually, seeing the same thing over and over, sometimes real, sometimes, I fear, imitation. What the better are they for that as souls or as citizens or any other way? No; when your foot is firm on the bottom rung don't mark time on it, but step up to the next rung and get firm upon that."

"I quite get your point. But I'm still on the solid ground."

"Solid!" cried Marvin. "Good Lord! But the paper goes to press to-day and I must get down to the printer. With a circulation of ten thousand or so we do things modestly, you know—not like you plutocrats of the daily Press. I am practically the staff."

"You said you had a warning."

"Yes, yes, I wanted to give you a warning." Marvin's thin, eager face became intensely serious. "If you have any ingrained religious or other prejudices which may cause you to turn down this subject after you have investigated it, then don't investigate at all—for it is dangerous."

"What do you mean—dangerous?"

"They don't mind honest doubt or honest criticism, but if they are badly treated they are dangerous."

"Who are 'they'?"

"Ah, who are they? I wonder. Guides, controls, psychic entities of some kind. Who the agents of vengeance—or I should say justice—are, is really not essential. The point is that they exist."

"Oh, rot, Marvin!"

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Pernicious rot! These are the old theological bogies of the Middle Ages coming

up again. I am surprised at a sensible man like you!"

Marvin smiled—he had a whimsical smile—but his eyes, looking out from under bushy yellow brows, were as serious as ever.

"You may come to change your opinion. There are some queer sides to this question. As a friend I put you wise to this one."

"Well, put me wise, then."

THUS encouraged Marvin went into the matter. He rapidly sketched the career and fate of a number of men who had, in his opinion, played an unfair game with these forces, become an obstruction, and suffered for it. He spoke of judges who had given prejudiced decisions against the cause; of journalists who had worked up stunt cases for sensational purposes and to throw discredit on the movement; of others who had interviewed mediums to make game of them, or who, having started to investigate, had drawn back alarmed and given a negative decision when their inner soul knew that the facts were true. It was a formidable list, for it was long and precise, but Malone was not to be driven.

"If you pick your cases I have no doubt one could make such a list about any subject. Mr. Jones said that Raphael was a bungler, and Mr. Jones died of angina pectoris. Therefore it is dangerous to criticize Raphael. That seems to be the argument."

"Well, if you like to think so."

"Take the other side. Look at Morgate. He has always been an enemy, for he is a convinced materialist. But he prospers—look at his professorship."

"Ah, an honest doubter. Certainly. Why not?"

"And Morgan, who at one time exposed mediums."

"If they were really false he did good service."

"And Falconer, who has written so bitterly about you."

"Ah, Falconer! Do you know anything of Falconer's private life? No. Well, take it from me he has got his dues. He doesn't know why. Some day these gentlemen will begin to compare notes, and then it may dawn on them. But they get it."

He went on to tell a horrible story of one who had devoted his considerable talents to picking Spiritualism to pieces, though really convinced of its truth, because his worldly ends were served thereby. The end was ghastly—too ghastly for Malone.

"Oh, cut it out, Marvin!" he cried, impatiently. "I'll say what I think, no more and no less, and I won't be scared by you or your spooks into altering my opinions."

"I never asked you to."

"You got a bit near it. What you have said strikes me as pure superstition. If what you say is true you should have the police after you."

"Yes, if we did it. But it is out of our hands. However, Malone, for what it's worth I have given you the warning and you can now go your way. Bye-bye! You can always ring me up at the office of *Dawn*."

If you want to know if a man is of the true Irish blood there is one infallible test. Put him in front of a swing-door with "Push" or "Pull" printed upon it. The Englishman will obey like a sensible man. The Irishman, with less sense but more individuality, will at once and with vehemence do the opposite. So it was with Malone. Marvin's well-meant warning simply raised a rebellious spirit within him, and when he called for Enid to take her to the Bolsover séance he had gone back several degrees in his dawning sympathy for the subject. Challenger bade them farewell with many gibes, his beard projecting forward and his eyes closed with upraised eyebrows, as was his wont when inclined to be facetious.

"You have your powder-bag, my dear Enid. If you see a particularly good specimen of ectoplasm in the course of the evening, don't forget your father. I have a microscope, chemical reagents, and everything ready. Perhaps even a small *Poltergeist* might come your way. Any trifle would be welcome."

His bull's bellow of laughter followed them into the lift.

V.

WHICH DESCRIBES SOME STRANGE DOINGS IN HAMMERSMITH.

THE PROVISION MERCHANT'S establishment of Mr. Bolsover proved to be a euphemism for an old-fashioned grocer's shop, in the most crowded part of Hammersmith. The neighbouring church was chiming out the three-quarters as the taxi drove up, and the shop was full of people, so Enid and Malone walked up and down outside. As they were so engaged another taxi drove up and a large, untidy-looking, bearded man in a suit of Harris tweed stepped out of it. He glanced at his watch and then began to pace the pavement. Presently he noted the others and came up to them.

"May I ask if you are the journalists who

are going to attend the séance ? I thought so. Old Bolsover is terribly busy, so you were wise to wait. Bless him, he is one of God's saints in his way."

"You are Mr. Algernon Mailey, I presume ? "

"Yes. I am the gentleman whose credulity is giving rise to considerable anxiety upon the part of my friends, as one of the rags remarked the other day." His laugh was so infectious that the others were bound to laugh also. Certainly, with his athletic proportions, which had run a little to seed but were still notable, and with his loud voice and homely face, he gave no impression of instability.

"We are all labelled with some stigma by our opponents," said he. "I wonder what yours will be ? "

"We must not sail under false colours, Mr. Mailey," said Enid. "We are not yet among the believers."

"Quite right. You should take your time over it. It is infinitely the most important thing in the world, so it is worth taking time over. I took many years myself. Folk can be blamed for neglecting it, but no one can be blamed for being cautious in examination. Now I am all out for it, as you are aware, because I *know* it is true. There is such a difference between believing and knowing. I lecture a good deal. But I never want to convert my audience. I don't believe in sudden conversions. They are shallow, superficial things. All I want is to put the thing before the people as clearly as I can. I just tell them the truth, and why we know it is the truth. Then my job is done. They can take it or leave it. If they are wise they will explore along the paths that I indicate. If they are unwise they miss their chance. I don't want to press them or to proselytize. It's their affair, not mine."

"Well, that seems a reasonable view," said Enid, who was attracted by the frank manner of their new acquaintance. They were standing now in the full flood of light cast by Bolsover's big plate-glass window. She had a good look at him, his broad forehead, his curious grey eyes, thoughtful and yet eager, his straw-coloured beard, which indicated the outline of an aggressive chin. He was solidity personified—the very opposite of the fanatic whom she had imagined. His name had been a good deal in the papers lately as a protagonist in the long battle, and she remembered that it had never been mentioned without an answering snort from her father.

"I wonder," she said to Malone, "what would happen if Mr. Mailey were locked up in a room with Dad ? "

Malone laughed. "There used to be a schoolboy question as to what would occur if an irresistible force were to strike an invincible obstacle."

"Oh, you are the daughter of Professor Challenger," said Mailey, with interest. "He is a big figure in the scientific world. What a grand world it would be if it would only realize its own limitations ! "

"I don't quite follow you."

"It is this scientific world which is at the bottom of much of our materialism. It has helped us in comfort—if comfort is any use to us. Otherwise it has usually been a curse to us, for it has called itself progress and given us a false impression that we are making progress, whereas we are really drifting very steadily backwards."

"Really I can't quite agree with you there, Mr. Mailey," said Malone, who was getting restive under what seemed to him dogmatic assertion. "Look at wireless. Look at the S.O.S. call at sea. Is that not a benefit to mankind ? "

"Oh, it works out all right sometimes. I value my electric reading-lamp, and that is a product of science. It gives us, as I said before, comfort and occasionally safety."

"Why, then, do you depreciate it ?

"Because it obscures the vital thing—the object of life. We were not put into this planet in order that we should go fifty miles an hour in a motor-car, or cross the Atlantic in an airship, or send messages either with or without wires. These are the mere trimmings and fringes of life. But these men of science have so riveted our attention on these fringes that we forget the central object."

"I don't follow you."

"It is not how fast you go that matters, it is the object of your journey. It is not how you send a message, it is what the value of the message may be. At every stage this so-called progress may be a curse, and yet as long as we use the word we confuse it with real progress and imagine that we are doing that for which God sent us into the world."

"Which is ? "

"To prepare ourselves for the next phase of life. There is mental preparation and spiritual preparation, and we are neglecting both. To be in old age better men and women, more unselfish, more broad-minded, more genial and tolerant, that is what we are for. It is a soul factory, and it is turning out a bad article. But—— Hullo ! " He burst into his infectious laugh. "Here I am delivering my lecture in the street. Force of habit, you see. My son says that if you press the third button of my waistcoat, I automatically deliver a lecture. But here is the good Bolsover to your rescue."

The worthy grocer had caught sight of

them through the window, and came bustling out, untying his white apron.

"Good evening all! I won't have you waiting in the cold. Besides, there's the clock, and time's up. It does not do to keep them waiting. Punctuality for all—that's my motto and theirs. My lads will shut up the shop. This way, and mind the sugar-barrel."

They threaded their way amid boxes of dried fruits and piles of cheese, finally passing between two great casks which hardly left room for the grocer's portly form. A narrow door beyond opened into the residential part of the establishment. Ascending the narrow stair, Bolsover threw open a door, and the visitors found themselves in a considerable room in which a number of people were seated round a large table. There was Mrs. Bolsover herself, cheerful and buxom like her husband. Three daughters were all of the same type. There was an elderly woman who seemed to be some relation, and two other colourless females who were described as neighbours and Spiritualists. The only man was a little grey-headed fellow with a pleasant face and quick, twinkling eyes, who sat at a harmonium in the corner.

"Mr. Smiley, our musician," said Bolsover. "I don't know what we could do without Mr. Smiley. It's vibrations, you know. Mr. Mailey could tell you about that. Ladies, you know Mr. Mailey, our very good friend. And these are the two inquirers—Miss Challenger and Mr. Malone."

The Bolsover family all smiled genially, but the nondescript elderly person rose to her feet and surveyed them with an austere face.

"You're very welcome here, you two strangers," she said. "But we would say to you that we want outward reverence. We respect the shining ones, and we will not have them insulted."

"I assure you we are very earnest and fair-minded," said Malone.

"We've had our lesson. We haven't forgotten the Meadows affair, Mr. Bolsover."

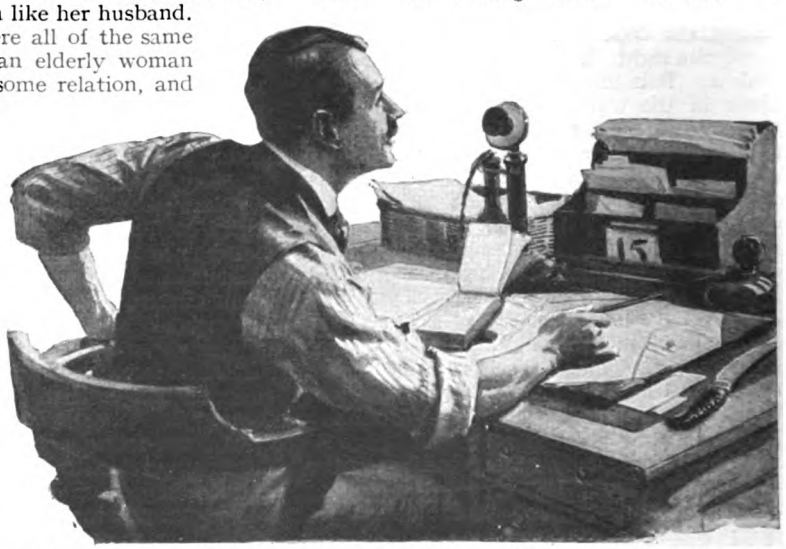
"No, no, Mrs. Selden. That won't happen again. We were rather upset over that," Bolsover added, turning to the visitors. "That man came here as our guest, and when the lights were out he poked the other sitters with his finger so as to make them think it was a spirit hand. Then he wrote the whole thing up as an exposure in the public Press, when the only fraudulent thing present had been himself."

Malone was honestly shocked. "I can assure you we are incapable of such conduct."

The old lady sat down, but still regarded them with a suspicious eye. Bolsover bustled about and got things ready.

"You sit here, Mr. Mailey. Mr. Malone, will you sit between my wife and my daughter? Where would the young lady like to sit?"

Enid was feeling rather nervous. "I think," said she, "that I would like to sit next Mr. Malone."



Mr. Bolsover wagged a paper accusingly at Malone. "Well, well," "Don't you think it a fair

Bolsover chuckled and winked at his wife. "Quite so. Most natural, I am sure."

THEY all settled into their places. Mr. Bolsover had switched off the electric light, but a candle burned in the middle of the table. Malone thought what a picture it would have made for a Rembrandt. Deep shadows draped it in, but the yellow light flickered upon the circle of faces: the strong, homely, heavy features of Bolsover, the solid line of his family circle, the sharp, austere countenance of Mrs. Selden, the earnest eyes and yellow beard of Mailey, the worn, tired faces of the two Spiritualist women, and,

finally, the firm, noble profile of the girl who sat beside him. The whole world had suddenly narrowed down to that one little group, so intensely concentrated upon its own purpose.

On the table there was scattered a curious collection of objects, which had all the same appearance of tools which had long been used. There was a battered brass speaking-

said he. "I told you that the funny side would get you."

trumpet, very discoloured, a tambourine, a musical-box, and a number of smaller objects. "We never know what they may want," said Bolsover, waving his hand over them.

"Who is the medium?" asked Malone.

"Well, we don't know ourselves. We all help, I think. Maybe I give as much as anyone. And mother, she is a help."

"Our family is a co-operative store," said his wife, and everyone laughed.

"I thought one medium was necessary."

"It is usual but not necessary," said Mailey in his deep, authoritative voice. "Crawford showed that pretty clearly in the Gallagher séances when he proved, by weighing chairs, that everyone in the circle lost from half to two pounds at a sitting, though the medium, Miss Kathleen, lost as many as ten or twelve. Here the long series of sittings—— How long, Mr. Bolsover?"

"Four years unbroken."

"The long series has developed everyone to some extent, so that there is a high average output from each, instead of an extraordinary amount from one."

"Output of what?"

"Animal magnetism, ectoplasm—in fact, power. That is the most comprehensive word. The Christ used that word. 'Much power has gone out of Me.' It is 'Dunamis' in the Greek, but the translators missed the point and translated it 'Virtue.' If a good Greek scholar who was also a profound occult student were to re-translate the New Testament, we should get some eye-openers. Dear old Ellis Powell did a little in that direction. His death was a loss to the world."

"Aye, indeed," said Bolsover, in a reverent voice. "But now, before we get to work, Mr. Malone, I want you just to note one or two things. You see the white spots on the trumpet and the tambourine? Those are luminous paint, so that we can see where they are. The table is just our dining-table, good British oak. You can examine it if you like. But you'll see things that won't depend upon the table. Now, Mr. Smiley, out goes the light and we'll ask you for 'Rock of Ages.'"

The harmonium droned in the darkness and the circle sang. They sang very tunefully, too, for the girls had fresh voices and true ears. Low and vibrant, the solemn rhythm became most impressive when no sense but that of hearing was free to act. Their hands, according to instructions, were laid lightly upon the table, and they were warned not to cross their legs.

Malone, with his hand touching Enid's, could feel the little quiverings which showed that her nerves were highly strung. The homely, jovial voice of Bolsover relieved the tension.

"That should do it," he said. "I feel as if the conditions were good to-night. Just a touch of frost in the air, too. I'll ask you now to join with me in prayer."

It was effective, that simple, earnest prayer in the darkness—an inky darkness

which was only broken by the last red glow of a dying fire.

" Oh, great Father of us all," said the voice, " You Who are beyond our thoughts and Who yet pervade our lives, grant that all evil may be kept from us this night and that we may be privileged to get in touch, if only for an hour, with those who dwell upon a higher plane than ours. You are our Father as well as theirs. Permit us, for a short space, to meet in brotherhood, that we may have an added knowledge of that eternal life which awaits us, and so be helped during our years of waiting in this lower world." He ended with the " Our Father," in which all joined. Then they sat in expectant silence. Outside was the dull roar of traffic and the occasional hoot of a passing car. Inside there was absolute stillness. Enid and Malone felt every sense upon the alert and every nerve on edge as they gazed out into the gloom.

" Nothing doing, mother," said Bolsover at last. " It's the strange company. New vibrations. They have to tune them in to get harmony. Give us another tune, Mr. Smiley—' Lead, kindly Light.' "

They sang the beautiful hymn together. As the verse closed an amazing thing happened—amazing, at least, to the novices, though it called for no remark from the circle.

The trumpet still shone upon the table, but two voices, those apparently of a man and a woman, broke out in the air above them and joined very tunefully in the singing. The hymn died away and all was silence and tense expectancy once more.

IT was broken by a deep male voice from the darkness. It was an educated English voice, well modulated, a voice which spoke in a fashion to which the good Bolsover could never attain.

" Good evening, friends. The power seems good to-night."

" Good evening, Luke. Good evening ! " cried everyone. " It is our teaching guide," Bolsover explained. " He is a high spirit from the sixth sphere who gives us instruction."

" I may seem high to you," said the voice. " But what am I to those who in turn instruct me ? It is not my wisdom. Give me no credit. I do but pass it on."

" Always like that," said Bolsover. " No swank. It's a sign of his height."

' I see you have two inquirers present. Good evening, young lady. You know nothing of your own powers or destiny. You will find them out. Good evening, sir. You are on the threshold of great knowledge. Is there any subject upon which you would wish me to say a few words ? I see that you are making notes."

Malone had, as a fact, disengaged his hand in the darkness and was jotting down in shorthand the sequence of events.

" What shall I speak of ? "

" Of love and marriage," suggested Mrs. Bolsover, nudging her husband.

" Well, I will say a few words on that. I will not take long, for others are waiting. The room is crowded with spirit people. I wish you to understand that there is one man, and only one, for each woman, and one woman only for each man. When those two meet they fly together and are one through all the endless chain of existence. Until they meet all unions are mere accidents which have no meaning. Sooner or later each couple becomes complete. It may not be here. It may be in the next sphere where the sexes meet as they do on earth. Or it may be further delayed. But every man and every woman has his affinity and will find it. Of earthly marriages perhaps one in five is permanent. The others are accidental. Real marriage is of the soul and spirit. Sex actions are a mere external symbol which mean nothing and are foolish, or even pernicious, when the thing which they should symbolize is wanting. Am I clear ? "

" Very clear," said Mailey.

" Some have the wrong mate here. Some have no mate, which is more fortunate. But all will sooner or later get the right mate. That is certain. Do not think that you will necessarily have your present husband when you pass over."

" Gawd be praised ! Gawd be thanked ! " cried a voice.

" No, Mrs. Selden, it is love—real love—which unites us here. He goes his way. You go yours. You are on separate planes, perhaps. Some day you will each find your own, when your youth has come back as it will over here."

" You speak of love. Do you mean sexual love ? " asked Mailey.

" Where are we gettin' to ? " murmured Mrs. Bolsover.

" Children are not born here. That is only on the earth plane. It was this aspect of marriage to which the great Teacher referred when He said : ' There will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage.' No ! it is purer, deeper, more wonderful, a unity of souls, a complete merging of interests and knowledge without a loss of individuality. The nearest you ever get to it is the first high passion, too beautiful for physical expression, when two high-souled lovers meet upon your plane. They may find lower expression afterwards, but they will always in their hearts know that the first

delicate, exquisite soul-union was the more lovely. So it is with us. Any question ? "

" If a woman loves two men equally, what then ? " asked Malone.

" It seldom happens. She nearly always knows which is really nearest to her. If she really did so then it would be a proof that neither was the real affinity, for he is bound to stand high above all. Of course, if she——"

The voice trailed off and the trumpet fell.

" Sing ' Angels are hoverin' around ' ! " cried Bolsover. " Smiley, hit that old harmonium. The vibrations are at zero."

Another bout of music, another silence, and then a most dismal voice. Never had Enid heard so sad a voice. It was like clods on a coffin. At first it was a deep mutter. Then it was a prayer—a Latin prayer apparently, for twice the word *Domine* sounded and once the word *peccavimus*. There was an indescribable air of depression and desolation in the room. " For God's sake, what is it ? " cried Malone.

The circle was equally puzzled.

" Some poor chap out of the lower spheres, I think," said Bolsover. " Orthodox folk say we should avoid them. I say we should hurry up and help them."

" Right, Bolsover ! " said Mailey, with hearty approval. " Get on with it, quick ! "

" Can we do anything for you, friend ? "

There was silence.

" He doesn't know. He doesn't understand the conditions. Where is Luke ? He'll know what to do."

" What is it, friend ? " asked the pleasant voice of the guide.

" There is some poor fellow here. We want to help him."

" Ah ! yes, yes, he has come from the outer darkness," said Luke, in a sympathetic voice. " He doesn't know. He doesn't understand. They come over here and when they find the real thing is quite different from anything they have been taught by the Churches they are helpless. Some adapt themselves and they go on. Others don't and they just wander on unchanging, like this man. He was a cleric, and a very narrow, bigoted one. This is the growth of his own mental seed sown upon earth—sown in ignorance and reaped in misery."

" What is amiss with him ? "

" He does not know he is dead. He walks in the mist. It is all an evil dream to him. He has been years so. To him it seems an eternity."

" Why do you not tell him—instruct him ? "

" We cannot. We——"

The trumpet crashed.

" Music, Smiley, music ! Now the vibrations should be better."

" The higher spirits cannot reach earth-bound folk," said Mailey. " They are in very different zones of vibration. It is we who are near them and can help them."

" Yes, you ! you ! " cried the voice of Luke.

" Mr. Mailey, speak to him. You know how ! " The low mutter had broken out again in the same weary monotone.

" Friend, I would have a word with you," said Mailey in a firm, loud voice. The mutter ceased and one felt that the invisible presence was straining its attention. " Friend, we are so sorry at your condition. You have passed on. You see us and you wonder why we do not see you. You are in the other world. But you do not know it, because it is not as you expected. You have not been received as you imagined. It is because you imagined wrong. Understand that all is well, and that God is good, and that all happiness is awaiting you if you will but raise your mind and pray for help, and above all think less of your own condition and more of those other poor souls who are round you."

THERE was a silence and Luke spoke again.

" He has heard you. He wants to thank you. He has some glimmer now of his condition. It will grow within him. He wants to know if he may come again."

" Yes ! yes ! " cried Bolsover. " We have quite a number who report progress from time to time. God bless you, friend. Come as often as you can." The mutter had ceased and there seemed to be a new feeling of peace in the air. A deep voice was heard.

" Plenty power still left. Red Cloud here. Show what he can do, if you like."

" Red Cloud is our Indian control. He is usually here when any purely physical phenomena have to be done. You there, Red Cloud ? "

Three loud thuds, like a hammer on wood, sounded from the darkness.

" Good evening, Red Cloud ! "

A new voice, slow, staccato, laboured, sounded above them.

" Good day, Chief ! How the Squaw ? How the Papooses ? Strange faces in wigwam to-night."

" Seeking knowledge, Red Cloud. Can you show what you can do ? "

" I try. Wait a little. Do all I can."

Again there was a long hush of expectancy. Then the novices were faced once more with the miraculous.

There came a dull glow in the darkness. It was apparently a wisp of luminous vapour.

It whisked across from one side to the other and then circled in the air. By degrees it condensed into a circular disk of radiance about the size of a bull's-eye lantern. It cast no reflection round it and was simply clean-cut in the gloom. Once it approached Enid's face and Malone saw it clearly from the side.

"Why, there is a hand holding it!" he cried, with sudden suspicion.

"Yes, there is a materialized hand," said Mailey. "I can see it clearly."

"Would you like it to touch you, Mr. Malone?"

"Yes, if it will."

The light vanished and an instant afterwards Malone felt pressure upon his own hand. He turned it palm upwards and clearly felt three fingers laid across it—smooth, warm fingers of adult size. He closed his own fingers and the hand seemed to melt away in his grasp.

"It has gone!" he gasped.

"Yes. Red Cloud is not very good at materializations. Perhaps we don't give him the proper sort of power. But his lights are excellent."

Several more had broken out. They were of different types, slow-moving clouds and little dancing sparks like glow-worms. At the same time both visitors were conscious of a cold wind which blew upon their faces. It was no delusion, for Enid felt her hair stream across her forehead.

"You feel the rushing wind," said Mailey. "Some of these lights would pass for tongues of fire, would they not? Pentecost does not seem such a very remote or impossible thing, does it?"

The tambourine had risen in the air, and the dot of luminous paint showed that it was circling round. Presently it descended and touched their heads, each in turn. Then with a jingle it quivered down upon the table.

"Why a tambourine? It seems always to be a tambourine," remarked Malone.

"It is a convenient little instrument," Mailey explained. "The only one which shows automatically by its noise where it is flying. I don't know what other I could suggest except a musical-box."

"Our box here flies round something amazin'," said Mrs. Bolsover. "It thinks nothing of winding itself up in the air as it flies. It's a heavy box, too."

"Nine pounds," said Bolsover. "Well, we seem to have got to the end of things. I don't think we shall get much more to-night. It has not been a bad sitting—what I should call a fair average sitting. We must wait a little before we turn on the light. Well, Mr. Malone, what do you think of it? Let's have any objections now before we part. That's the worst of you inquirers, you know. You often bottle things up in your own mind and let them loose afterwards, when it would have been easy to settle it at the time. Very nice and polite to our faces, and then we are a gang of swindlers in the report."

MALONE'S head was throbbing and he passed his hand over his heated brow.

"I am confused," he said, "but impressed. Oh, yes, certainly impressed. I've read of these things, but it is very different when you see them. What weighs most with me is the obvious sincerity and sanity of all you people. No one could doubt that."

"Come. We're gettin' on," said Bolsover.

"I try to think of the objections which would be raised by others who were not present. I'll have to answer them. First, there is the oddity of it all. It is so different to our preconceptions of spirit people."

"We must fit our theories to the facts," said Mailey. "Up to now we have fitted the facts to our theories. You must remember that we have been dealing to-night—with all respect to our dear good hosts—with a simple, primitive, earthly type of spirit, who has his very definite uses, but is not to be taken as an average type. You might as well take the stevedore whom you see on the quay as being a representative Englishman."

"There's Luke," said Bolsover.

"Ah, yes, he is, of course, very much higher. You heard him and could judge. What else, Mr. Malone?"

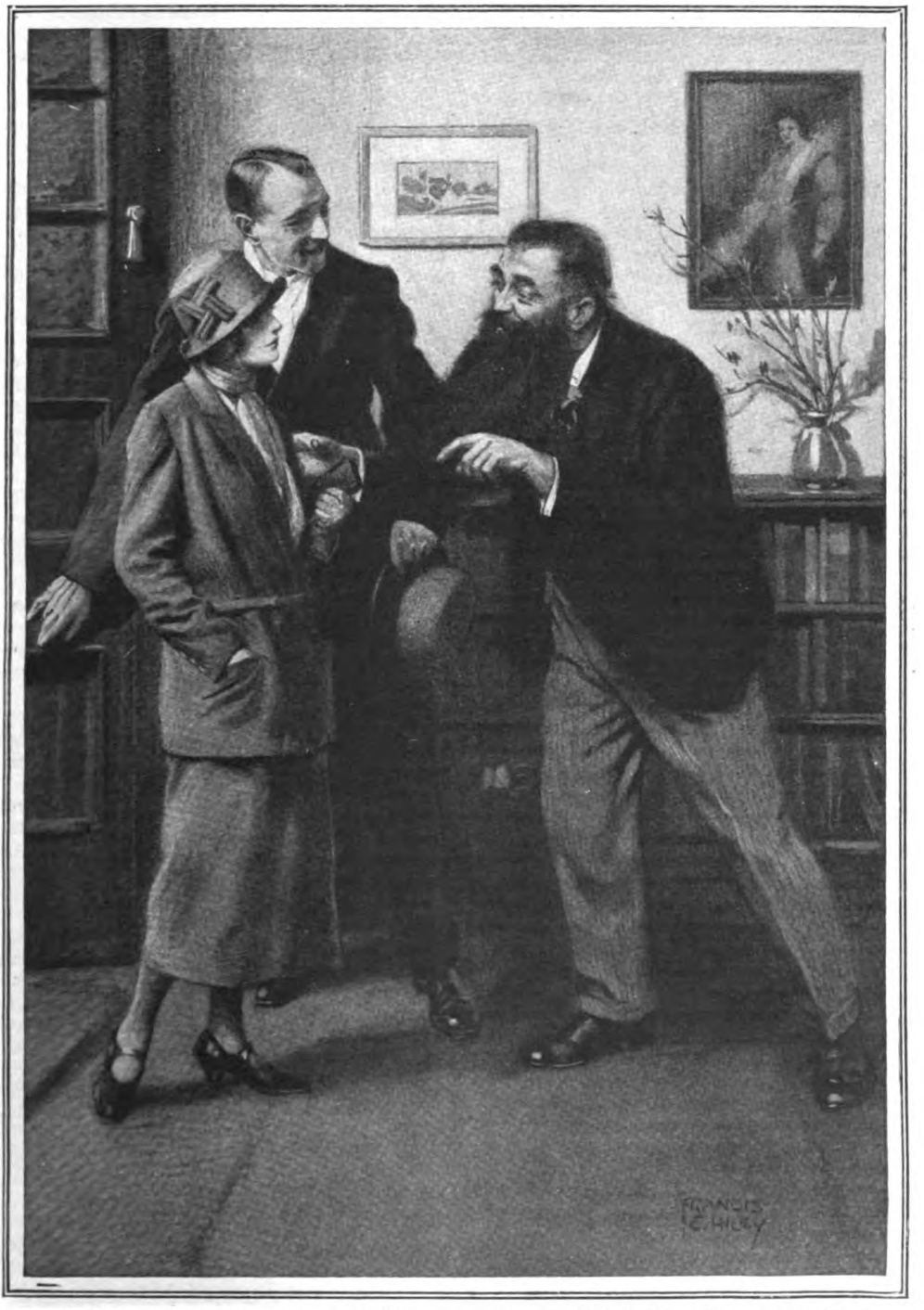
"Well, the darkness. Everything done in darkness. Why should all mediumship be associated with gloom?"

"You mean all physical mediumship. That is the only branch of the subject which needs darkness. It is purely chemical, like the darkness of the photographic room. It preserves the delicate physical substance which, drawn from the human body, is the basis of these phenomena. A cabinet is used for the purpose of condensing this same vaporous substance and helping it to solidify. Am I clear?"

"Yes; but it is a pity all the same. It gives a horrible air of deceit to the whole business."

"We get it now and again in the light, Mr. Malone," said Bolsover. "I don't know if Red Cloud is gone yet. Wait a bit. Where are the matches?" He lit the candle, which set them all blinking after their long darkness. "Now let us see what we can do."

There was a round wooden platter or circle of wood lying among the miscellaneous objects littered over the table to serve as playthings for the strange forces. Bolsover



Challenger bade them farewell with many gibes, and his bull's bellow of laughter followed them into the lift.

stared at it. They all stared at it. The circle had risen, but no one was within three feet of it.

"Please, Red Cloud, please!" cried Mrs. Bolsover.

Malone could hardly believe his eyes. The disk began to move. It quivered and then rattled upon the table, exactly as the lid of a boiling pot might do.

"Up with it, Red Cloud!" They were all clapping their hands.

The circle of wood, in the full light of the candle, rose upon edge and stood there shaking, as if trying to keep its balance.

"Give three tilts, Red Cloud."

The disk inclined forward three times. Then it fell flat and remained so.

'I am so glad you have seen that," said Mailey. "There is Telekenesis in its simplest and most decisive form."

"I could not have believed it!" cried Enid.

'Nor I," said Malone. "I have extended my knowledge of what is possible. Mr. Bolsover, you have enlarged my views."

"Good, Mr. Malone!"

"As to the power at the back of these things I am still ignorant. As to the things themselves I have now and henceforward not the slightest doubt in the world. I *know* that they are true. I wish you all good night. It is not likely that Miss Challenger or I will ever forget the evening that we have spent under your roof."

VI.

WHERE OUR COMMISSIONERS HAVE A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

MALONE sat at the side-table of the smoking-room of the Literary Club. He had Enid's impressions of the séance before him—very subtle and observant they were—and he was endeavouring to merge them in his own experience. A group of men were smoking and chatting round the fire. This did not disturb the journalist, who found, as many do, that his brain and his pen worked best sometimes when they were stimulated by the knowledge that he was part of a busy world. Presently, however, somebody who observed his presence brought the talk round to psychic subjects, and then it was more difficult for him to remain aloof. He leaned back in his chair and listened.

Polter, the famous novelist, was there, a brilliant man with a subtle mind, which he used too often to avoid obvious truth and to defend some impossible position for the sake of the empty dialectic exercise. He was holding forth now to an admiring, but not entirely a subservient, audience.

"Science," said he, "is gradually sweeping the world clear of all these old cobwebs of superstition. The world was like some old dusty attic, and the sun of science is bursting in, flooding it with light, while the dust settles gradually to the floor."

"By science," said someone, maliciously, "you mean, of course, men like Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, Lombroso, Richet, and so forth?"

Polter was not accustomed to be countered, and usually became rude.

"No, sir, I mean nothing so preposterous," he answered, with a glare. "No name, however eminent, can claim to stand for science so long as he is a member of an insignificant minority of scientific men."

"He is, then, a crank," said Pollifex, the artist, who usually played jackal to Polter.

The objector, one Millworthy, a free-lance of journalism, was not to be so easily silenced.

"Then Galileo was a crank in his day," said he. "And Harvey was a crank when he was laughed at over the circulation of the blood."

"It's the circulation of *The Daily Gazette* which is at stake," said Marrible, the humorist of the club. "If they get off their stunt I don't suppose they care a tinker's curse what is truth or what is not."

"Why such things should be examined at all, except in a police-court, I can't imagine," said Polter. "It is a dispersal of energy, a misdirection of human thought into channels which lead nowhere. We have plenty of obvious material things to examine. Let us get on with our job."

Atkinson, the surgeon, was one of the circle, and had sat silently listening. Now he spoke.

"I think the learned bodies should find more time for the consideration of psychic matters."

"Less," said Polter.

"You can't have less than nothing. They ignore them altogether. Some time ago I had a series of cases of telepathic *rapport* which I wished to lay before the Royal Society. My colleague Wilson, the zoologist, also had a paper which he proposed to read. They went in together. His was

accepted and mine rejected. The title of his paper was "The Reproductive System of the Dung-Beetle."

There was a general laugh.

"Quite right, too," said Polter. The humble Dung-Beetle was at least a fact. All this psychic stuff is not."

"No doubt you have good grounds for your views," chirped the mischievous Millworthy, a mild youth with a velvety manner. "I have little time for solid reading, so I should like to ask you which of Dr. Crawford's three books you consider the best."

"I never heard of the fellow."

Millworthy simulated intense surprise.

"Good heavens, man! Why, he is *the* authority. If you want pure laboratory experiments, those are the books. You might as well lay down the law about zoology and confess that you had never heard of Darwin."

"This is not science," said Polter, emphatically.

"What is really not science," said Atkinson, with some heat, "is the laying down of the law on matters which you have not studied. It is talk of that sort which has brought me to the edge of Spiritualism, when I compare this dogmatic ignorance with the earnest search for truth conducted by the great Spiritualists. Many of them took twenty years of work before they formed their conclusions."

"But their conclusions are worthless because they are upholding a formed opinion."

"But each of them fought a long fight before he formed that opinion. I know a few of them, and there is not one who did not take a lot of convincing."

Polter shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, they can have their spooks if it makes them happier, so long as they let me keep my feet firm on the ground."

"Or stuck in the mud," said Atkinson.

"I would rather be in the mud with sane people than in the air with lunatics," said Polter. "I know some of these Spiritualist people, and I believe that you can divide them equally into fools and rogues."

MALONE had listened with interest and then with a growing indignation. Now he suddenly took fire.

"Look here, Polter," he said, turning his chair towards the company, "it is fools and dolts like you who are holding back the world's progress. You admit that you have read nothing of this, and I'll swear you have seen nothing. Yet you use the position and the name which you have won in other matters in order to discredit a number of people who, whatever they may be, are certainly very earnest and very thoughtful."

"Oh," said Polter, "I had no idea you had got so far. You don't dare to say so in your articles. You *are* a Spiritualist, then. That rather discounts your views, does it not?"

"I am not a Spiritualist, but I am an honest inquirer, and that is more than you have ever been. You call them rogues and fools, but, little as I know, I am sure that some of them are men and women whose boots you are not worthy to clean."

"Oh, come, Malone!" cried one or two voices, but the insulted Polter was on his feet. "It's men like you who empty this club," he cried, as he swept out. "I shall certainly never come here again to be insulted."

"I say, you've done it, Malone!"

"I felt inclined to help him out with a kick. Why should he ride roughshod over other people's feelings and beliefs? He has got on and most of us haven't, so he thinks it a condescension to come among us."

"Dear old Irishman!" said Atkinson, patting his shoulder. "Rest, perturbed spirit, rest! But I wanted to have a word with you. Indeed, I was waiting here because I did not want to interrupt you."

"I've had interruptions enough!" cried Malone. "How could I work with that damned donkey braying in my ear?"

"Well, I've only a word to say. I've got a sitting to-night with Linden, the famous medium, of whom I spoke to you at the Psychic College. I have an extra ticket. Would you care to come?"

"Come? I should think so!"

"I have another ticket. I should have asked Polter if he had not been so offensive. Linden does not mind sceptics, but objects to scoffers. Who should I ask?"

Let Miss Enid Challenger come. We work together, you know."

"Why, of course I will. Will you let her know?"

"Certainly."

"It's at seven o'clock to-night. The Psychic College. You know, the place down at Holland Park."

"Yes, I have the address. Very well, Miss Challenger and I will certainly be there."

(To be continued.)

REVENGE IS SWEET

By

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

"I'M so glad you could get away," said my Aunt Clara, looking up from her writing-table. "You had a good journey, I hope?"

"Yes, thank you," I answered, politely.

"We're quite alone this week-end," she continued. "But I know you won't mind that."

"Oh, rather not. All I want is a little rest and fresh air. It's been simply sweltering in the City these last few days."

My Aunt Clara uttered a faint sound of annoyance, which for a second I mistook for sympathy.

"Your uncle won't like that at all," she added.

"Isn't Uncle George here, then?" I asked.

"He had to go up for a tiresome board-meeting," said my aunt. "It's too bad, the way they will bother him in this fine weather. But he's catching the late train back to-night."

"Oh," I said, making a mental note to slip off to bed early—for my Uncle George is never in the best of moods after a long train journey. And this reminded me of something else.

"Am I in the same room as usual?" I inquired.

"Yes," said my aunt. "You remember the way, don't you?"

I gathered that she wished to return to her correspondence, but I had just one more question to put.

"And Audrey?" I asked.

My Aunt Clara looked vaguely round the morning-room, and then seemed to collect her thoughts.

"You might try the stables," she said, at length. "I believe she told me——"

"Right," I cut in briskly. "Then in that case I think I'll just——"

But my aunt wasn't listening any longer. I went back into the hall, picked up my hat, and wandered off down the drive.

I FOUND my pretty cousin, as her mother had suggested, in the stable yard. The bonnet of her little car was open, and she and Plunkett—my uncle's chauffeur—were occupied, so far as I could judge, in diagnosing a case of engine trouble.

"Hullo!" she called out, as I came nearer. "You're just in time to help. Did you manage to get here all right?"

The answer to this last question was so apparent that I left it alone.

"What's the matter with Emma?" I asked. For Emma is the name of my pretty cousin's little car—or, rather, the name which she has chosen to bestow on it.

"Nothing," she answered. "She just won't start."

"I should hardly call that nothing," I ventured to observe. "I mean to say, it's a bit of a drawback sometimes—where a car is concerned."

"Funny!" said my pretty cousin, scathingly. "Now, just for a punishment, you shall have a go at swinging her over."

"But what's the self-starter for?"

"You'd better ask the makers," said my pretty cousin. Plunkett, whose sense of humour is solely confined to mechanical matters, gave a hoarse chuckle at this point. Audrey looked at him angrily, but chose to vent her annoyance on me.

"Hurry up," she said, curtly. "We're all waiting."

So I bent down, grasped the starting handle, and rotated it with the utmost violence. Emma danced about on her springs and the blood nearly burst through the top of my head, but not so much as a solitary explosion did she vouchsafe.

"Just as I thought," was Audrey's only comment, as I released the handle and staggered back, overcome with giddiness. "I'm afraid you'll have to give her a push."

I felt like giving Emma a good deal more than a push; but as I had no wish to be

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called "funny" again in that particular tone of voice, I kept this thought to myself.

"All right," I said. And then: "Hullo! What's happened to Plunkett?"

"He's gone," said Audrey. "I told him——"

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, come on," she said, impatiently. "It won't hurt you to shove Emma a few yards."

I was beginning to think regretfully of the comparative coolness of my office, but where Audrey is concerned it is never much use to argue. I took off my coat while she closed the bonnet again and climbed into the driver's seat.

"Now, then," she said.

I went round to the back and began heaving like Sisyphus himself.

"Just a second," my pretty cousin called over her shoulder. "I'd forgotten the hand-brake."

I bent down once more. The gravel came in showers from beneath my shoes, but this time Emma was undoubtedly moving.

"That's right," shouted Audrey. "A bit faster, if you can manage it."

I tucked in my head, shut my eyes, clenched my teeth, and began to run. "Pop!" went Emma's exhaust. "Pop-pop!" And then, suddenly: "P-p-p-pop, bang!" And as I scrambled up from where I had fallen heavily on my knees, I was just in time to see the little car vanishing round the corner. I heard the crunch of successive gear-changes, and then the rising note was absorbed in the general summery noises and I was left utterly alone.

ABOUT five minutes later, when I had cooled down sufficiently to resume my coat, I was startled by the harsh shriek of an electric horn, and the little car came dashing back again, swerved savagely in my direction, missed me, and fetched up in the coach-house with a shriek of agony from the hastily-applied brakes. The roar of its engine died abruptly away, and Audrey—looking remarkably cool—came walking towards me.

"There," she said, with a sound of satisfaction. "That's all right."

"But aren't you going out?" I asked. "Do you mean to say——"

"Why?" she interrupted. "Did you hope I was leaving you?"

"No, of course not. But——"

"I only wanted to make sure that I *could* start her," she explained. "You see—— Well, come along into the kitchen-garden, and I'll tell you all about it."

Not without a certain anxiety, engendered by the more than usually sparkling condition of her eyes, I followed her through the green door in the corner of the yard; and there, as we crouched together under the netting which was supposed to protect the raspberry bushes—Audrey gorging herself, and I watching her—she proceeded to fulfil her promise. It was some time before I traced any connection between the present recital and my recent labours with Emma, and when I did—— However, let's take things in their proper order.

"You were an awful goat," she began, "not to come down here last week-end. We had the most frightful fun."

"I wasn't invited," I pointed out.

"That's a rotten excuse," said my pretty cousin. "Though as a matter of fact we had every room full, so you couldn't have come, anyhow."

"Tell me about the fun," I suggested.

"Well," she went on, taking another raspberry, "it was just the usual gang. All my noisiest friends, that you and father are so rude about. And then, on Saturday night, we all went over to Rosemary Bisham's—she'd got a big party, too; at least, her mother had—and we danced like blazes. I had a proposal, what's more."

"And was that fun?" I asked

"Not bad," said my pretty cousin. "It was Rosemary's brother. They call him 'Tom.'"

"Do they?" I said. I felt, in a way, that she oughtn't to have given me this detail. Of course, I wouldn't dream of passing it on, and yet—— Well, dash it, I'm only her male cousin. I find it a doubtful form of flattery when she takes to treating me as a sister.

"Of course," she was saying, "I told him not to be an idiot. But I quite like him, and the next night he was really awfully amusing."

"Oh!" I said. "What did he do?"

"He brought the whole lot over after dinner, and they pretended to be burglars. You've never seen such a mess as they made of all our bedrooms. Mother was absolutely taken in, and so were lots of the others."

A curious form of courtship, I thought; but you never know what my pretty cousin will think funny.

"Did you lose much?" I asked.

"Oh, of course they didn't really take anything. They just hid all our brushes and shoes and any jewellery they could find, and then the next day Tom sent over a letter with a lot of clues in it, and we were supposed to work them out and find where he'd put everything. As a matter of fact, though, all our party went back to London on Monday, so that bit of it fell rather flat. I had to clear everything up by myself."

"Still," I said, "it was a very witty idea."

"Wasn't it?" agreed my pretty cousin. "And to-night I'm going to have my revenge."

How well I recognized the symptoms of embarrassment and alarm which, at these words, began creeping up my spine. But it is difficult to make one's escape when penned in under a raspberry net. I took two stealthy steps, and then Audrey had caught me by the sleeve.

"Wait," she said. "I'm just getting to the most important part. The part where *you* come in."

I knew it.

"If you think for one moment——" I began. But this was as far as I got.

"It's all perfectly simple," Audrey cut in. "I've thought everything out, and as long as you do what you're told, we can't possibly go wrong. Now, don't be dull. Don't be a spoil-sport. Don't——"

"Yes, but I hardly know the Bishams. It isn't as if——"

"What *does* that matter? You won't even see them. All you've got to do is to come over with me after dinner, in Emma, and I'll show you which is Rosemary's window. Then you climb in, help yourself from her dressing-table, put the stuff in the pillow-case that I'm taking, and we'll drop it all into their pond. You'll be safe in bed by eleven."

The objections to this plan were past all numbering, but with so many to choose from it is intelligible enough that I should have begun with one of the weakest.

"But why Rosemary?" I asked. "I thought you said——"

"Don't be an owl. I don't want to make Tom think I really like him, and they've got no one else in the house—except the old Bishams, and they wouldn't see the joke."

"Oh!" I said, with an attempt at sarcasm. "Then if you dropped Tom Bisham's studs into the pond, he would take it as encouragement?"

My pretty cousin opened her eyes very wide.

"Well, of course," she said.

The attitude towards Mr. Bisham, junior, which was revealed by this part of the plan was the only consolatory feature of the very long and acrimonious argument which then took place under the raspberry net. I had seen the gentleman in question on several occasions, and, quite apart from a deep-rooted prejudice which I had against Audrey marrying anybody at all, he had never struck me as being in any way a suitable candidate. What Audrey needs, of course, is not another irresponsible scatter-brain like herself, but a steady-going, sensible, level-headed fellow like—well, I can't think of anyone at the moment, but I know I'm right. And yet, as in the heat of the discussion I ventured to characterize young Mr. Bisham as a "flibbertigibbet," I was suddenly presented with a very alarming fact.

As I scrambled up from where I had fallen heavily on my knees, I was just in time to see the car vanishing round the corner.

"I don't care what you call him," my pretty cousin burst out, "but father took no end of a liking to him, and you know how particular *he* is."

I did, indeed. And it also seemed to me that young Mr. Bisham must be more serious in his intentions than I had suspected, if he had really succeeded in getting round Uncle George. On the other hand——

"I take it," I said, wishing to reach the bottom of this business, "that your father wasn't down here last week-end, then?"

"Of course not," said Audrey. "That was just why I had the party."

So my Uncle George's partiality for Mr. Bisham did not cover the latter's exploits as an amateur burglar. Good. And yet, it wasn't exactly for me to tell him—— Was it?

I didn't like it, though. My pretty cousin is so notoriously rash in the conduct of her flirtations, and one of the greatest safeguards hitherto had been my Uncle George's unceasing and unalterable dislike for every young man whom she introduced to his notice. I suppose I must have looked a little worried at this point, and Audrey naturally misunderstood the reason.

"Of course," she said, "if you're going to make that kind of face about it, then we might just as well chuck the whole idea. Only——"

"No, no," I exclaimed, unguardedly. "I wasn't thinking of that at all."

"Then you *will* come!" she cried at once. "You *will* help me to pay them back; won't you?"

I tried to meet her eyes, but she had fairly got me on the run—as, in the end, she always does.

"I ought to know better by now," I said, "than to mix myself up in any more of your chuckle-headed adventures. However,

if you're really set on it, and if you'll promise me not to have too many happy thoughts after we've got there—I mean, no setting fire to the house, or anything of that sort—then I suppose I must. But," I added, firmly, as she gave a yelp of triumph, "I draw the line at throwing all their things into the pond. A joke's a joke, but we don't want to do any real damage."

My pretty cousin looked a little disappointed.

"But old Bisham simply *adores* dragging his pond," she said. "You couldn't think of anything that would give him more pleasure."

"On the other hand," I pointed out, "Mr. Bisham's pleasure is not, as I understand it, even a secondary object of our expedition."

"Well," said Audrey, "we'll think about it. And now let's go back and have some tea."

I saw that she was still unconvinced, but after all she couldn't very well submerge her friend's toilet appliances without my assistance. The detail could be dealt with well enough when the actual time came.

THERE should be no need to recount how often, during the interval between tea and dinner, I found occasion to regret what I had undertaken; and even at dinner itself I fear my Aunt Clara found me a little preoccupied and inattentive.

"I'm afraid you're tired," she said once. "You must make sure that your visit to us is a real rest." And then, plaintively: "Audrey, dear, I know you think I'm silly and dull, but was there really anything to laugh at in that?"

My pretty cousin jumped up and kissed her.

"I don't, mother," she protested. "And, of *course*, I wasn't laughing at you."

Nevertheless, she had undoubtedly laughed. I had no difficulty in identifying the object of her mirth.

After dinner Audrey and I played two-handed Mah-Jongg according to the peculiar rules invented by herself, which are only gradually disclosed as the game proceeds, and invariably work out to her own advantage. By ten o'clock, when I had lost two pounds seven and ninepence, I was glad enough to give the prearranged yawn, and my Aunt Clara, putting down her book, very kindly offered to go with me to my room to see that everything was quite comfortable.

"Tell her not to," whispered Audrey, urgently, as I stooped to pick up the handkerchief which she had dropped.

I was puzzled at this instruction, but did my best to obey.

"Please don't bother, Aunt Clara," I said. "I'm quite sure I've got everything."

"Of course he has," added Audrey. "Don't coddle him, mother."

"But I always like——" my aunt began.

"Oh, look!" cried my pretty cousin. "There's a daddy-long-legs on your hair!"

There wasn't, of course. But by the time the resultant excitement had calmed down, my good aunt had forgotten all about her hospitable intention. I poured out her hot water for her, accompanied her with it to the door of her bedroom, wished her good night, and, having given my solemn word to extinguish all the lights in the drawing-room, went back there to await my fellow-conspirator.

In about five minutes or so she reappeared, suitably dressed in a Fair Isle sweater over her evening frock, and a pair of rubber half-Wellingtons, which I recognized as the property of my uncle. The description of this costume may not sound particularly attractive, but as a matter of fact she was looking quite her best.

She must have seen the note of interrogation in my face, for she dashed into the answer before I had time to speak.

"Oh!" she said, as though disposing of some trifling matter, "I couldn't let mother go into your room because—well, I didn't like to ask for the key of the linen cupboard."

The explanation seemed slightly obscure.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I took the pillow-case off your bed," she said. "But if you don't like sleeping without it, you can always put the bolster on the top. After all," she added, with what I took to be an appeal to my reason, "without a pillow-case we might just as well not go at all."

I hesitated for a moment between alternative retorts, and thus missed my chance altogether.

"Hurry up," my pretty cousin was saying, as she switched off the lights. "We haven't left ourselves any too much time."

I stumbled after her, barking my shins on the edge of a chair, followed her down a long and unfamiliar corridor—with a diabolical step in it that nearly flung me on my face—and finally collided with her somewhere near the back door.

"Put this on," she whispered, handing me something that smelt of Harris tweed and cheese.

"What is it?" I asked.

'Your coat. I hid it in the larder just before dinner. It's got the pillow-case in the pocket."

"You think of everything," I said. But she was gone again. A faintly luminous oblong showed me that the door was now

open, and a distant rustling in the shrubbery was my only clue to her whereabouts. I struggled into the coat and hurried after her.

My progress was not eased by the number of branches that struck me in the face and the spiders' webs that I unwittingly destroyed; but after a few minutes the shrubbery came to an end, and I found myself nearing the stable yard. As I drew breath to ask for further directions, I caught the noise of Emma's self-starter, and it was a slight mitigation of my general anxiety that this time it did what it was supposed to do. Guided by the palpitations of the engine, I completed my journey at the run.

"Jump in!" shouted Audrey, as the little car dashed towards me. I took a flying leap, achieved the step, and landed heavily on the front seat—to the accompaniment of a ripping sound from the back of my overcoat. It was not surprising that the violence of my arrival should temporarily have disorganized the steering. There was a metallic crash as the near wing grazed the old mounting-block, and then—bouncing off it again—we shot down the drive.

THE headlights threw vast, unwieldy shadows in our path and the road wound about with one right-angled turn after another; but Audrey never raised her foot from the accelerator. I tried to encourage myself by remembering the innumerable times that she must have made this trip, and then, suddenly and with a jerk that came near throwing me through the windscreen, we skidded to a standstill.

"Gate," said Audrey. "Hop out and open it."

I obeyed.

"And leave it open," she threw back, as she passed me.

Emma seemed as restive as a two-year-old, but I just had time to wedge a stone under the gate before she got really going. I doubt if she was doing much over twenty as I clambered aboard for the second time.

"Now, then," said my pretty cousin, and away we went again. It was too dark to see the speedometer needle, but as my heart oscillated between my pumps and the back of my throat I needed no more accurate gauge of our velocity. We must have covered the ten miles which separated us from our destination in well under fifteen minutes, and yet it seemed one of the longest periods in my life. I would have had no shame in telling Audrey how frightened I was, if only it had been possible to make her hear. But it wasn't. Every nut and rivet in Emma's system seemed to be shrieking their objection to the strain which they were undergoing, her electric horn was in almost perpetual action, and her silencer was one of the least effective pieces of mechanism that I have ever struck. And yet, miraculously, we held the road, and finally—with another jerk which found me as unprepared as the first—we stopped with the bonnet within six inches of the Bishams' lodge gates.

"Hop out," said Audrey; but for the moment I was past hopping.

"Look here," I expostulated; "in another minute we shall be in the thick of it and you've hardly told me anything. How am I to know the right room? How am I to find you again? Where are you going to——"

"Keep cool," interrupted my pretty cousin. "I'll show you the window, and I'll wait underneath till you come out again."

"Yes, but——"

"And we'll leave Emma just round the corner of the drive, all ready to start back, so that if anything goes wrong—— Oh, don't be so silly. What are you groaning about?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Well, open the gates, then."

I got out.

"And leave them open?" I asked.

"Of course. Oh, I know all about the cows, but they're nothing to worry about. They're asleep by now."

"Lucky cows," I said. But I opened the gates, and this time Emma actually waited for me.

"What am I to do," I asked suddenly, "if I find your friend Rosemary in bed?"

"You won't," said Audrey. She had stopped the engine, and now she held the little car on the foot-brake at the top of a long incline. "Listen," she added.

I held my breath, and at once there came to me the distant sound of a gramophone.

"They're dancing," said my pretty cousin.

"Who are? The old Bishams?"

"No, of course not. Tom and Rosemary."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"They always do," said Audrey. "They go on like that for hours."

In other circumstances I might have admired—or then, again, I might not—the extraordinary energy which could cause a young man and his sister to dance together, alone and in the depths of the country, for hours and hours on end. As things were, however, it only struck me as another manifestation of the bewildering folly of what Audrey had described as her "noisiest friends." Surely there must be something more than those five years which represent my start in life over my pretty cousin to separate me so completely from this gang of indefatigable idiots. What was it, though? And, hardly less interesting, what was it

about Audrey which, in essentials, made her so different from the rest?

For the thousandth time I turned this problem over in my mind, and as I did so my pretty cousin released the pressure of her right foot. Emma began silently coasting down the hill. The time for philosophy had passed.

On the level ground we stopped, and together we turned the little car round so as to be ready for instant flight. Then, switching off the lights, we tiptoed across a dew-sprinkled lawn, emerged on a broad stretch of gravel, and so—hand in hand, I believe, but this was only so as to tread more lightly—we crept right up under the house.

"I'll wait here and whistle if anything happens," said Audrey. "That will be extremely helpful," I replied.

"Well?" I whispered. "What do we do next?"

My pretty cousin released my hand and pointed upward.

"That's the window," she answered, equally cautiously. "And it's open, what's more."

True enough. It was also about fifteen feet from the ground, and I was wearing—under the remains of my overcoat—an almost new dinner-jacket and accessories. Much may be done with the aid of a drain-pipe or virginia creeper—and both were available in this case—but the expedition was not, as I saw things, being undertaken for the benefit of my tailor. I stepped carefully back, and reconnoitred the position.

"There's a ground-floor window open, too," I pointed out. "Would you mind awfully if I went up by the stairs?"

I cannot say that the suggestion was met with enthusiasm.

"It's not nearly so sporting," said Audrey. And, as an afterthought: "Tom Bisham climbed right in at that little window on our top landing, when they burgled us."

"I can't help that," I said. "My methods may not be as spectacular as Mr. Bisham's, but they're good enough as a means to an end. If you want your friend Rosemary's hairbrushes put in this pillow-case, you'd better let me attend to it before I break my neck—not afterwards. Oh, and that reminds me——"

I was going on to develop my argument against dropping the booty into the pond, but Audrey silenced me with an urgent "Sh!"

"What is it?" I asked, looking nervously round.

"Don't talk so much. They'll hear you."

"Well, may I go up by the stairs?"

I could see, even in the darkness, how little she approved of the suggestion. But I think she realized that there were limits to her power over me.

"All right," she said finally. "That ground-floor window belongs to old Mr.

Bisham's study. If you go straight through into the passage, you'll see the back stairs on the left; and when you get to the top, Rosemary's door is the second on the right. I'll wait here and whistle if anything happens."

"That will be extremely helpful," I replied; and since I was now very anxious to get through with the whole business as soon as possible, I flung one leg over the sill of the study window. But there, for the moment, I remained. I had just noticed something.

"Audrey," I whispered. "I say, Audrey! The gramophone's stopped."

"What?"

"The gramophone's stopped. Do you think——"

"No, no. They're only winding it up. Go on!"

"Yes, but——"

She rushed at me and gave me a violent push. I caught at something which, from its behaviour, I took to be a revolving bookcase; slithered wildly across the carpet, and fetched up with a thud against the door. My heart was beating uncontrollably, and my dislike for the adventure had reached a pitch which can hardly be described in words, but even at this dreadful moment I drew a little much-needed encouragement from the continued silence in the rest of the house. The Bisham family and their servants had still not heard me. Very carefully I opened the door and peered out.

A light was burning in the corridor, and by its aid I was able to check the first of my pretty cousin's geographical statements. There, on the left, were the back stairs. I closed the door with every possible precaution against sound, and began my ascent. It was at this point that I began to wish that I had asked if the Bishams kept any dogs—and, if so, whether they bit, or only barked.

The thought, however, was only a passing one, for as I emerged on the first-floor landing a fresh difficulty drove it out of my head. There was no light here, and though I felt about over what seemed to be acres of wall, I was quite unable to discover any switch. Matches? No; I'd left them in my other suit when I'd dressed for dinner.

"Dash!" I muttered, and began trying to count the doors in the dark. But at once I noticed the most extraordinary change in this invisible landing. While I had been feeling for the switch I had encountered nothing but wall-paper, but as soon as I changed the object of my search I could find nothing but doors. One—two—three—— Hullo! The stairs again. I just managed to save myself, and started off in the other direction. One—two—— Yes; this must be it. I'd got the handle now. It turned, with a squeak that made my blood run cold; but I was inside the room at last.

"Now, then," I said to myself; and at the same moment I heard a faint whistle from the garden below.

Something—to use my pretty cousin's ominous expression—had happened.

I was not left in much doubt, or for more than a second, as to what it was. A savage yell from the bottom of the back stairs and the clattering of feet on the bare treads told me that the Bishams were in full cry. I slammed the door, locked it, and dashed to the window.

"Audrey!" I shouted. "They're after me. What shall I do?"

I could just see her moving away towards the bushes, but at my agonized appeal she stopped.

"Take something!" she called back. "Never mind what. Take something, and jump!"

And with these words she turned once more, gathered up her skirts, and streaked off like the wind.

THE Bishams were battering at the door now, and there was no time to be lost, for at any second it might occur to one of them to rush down and cut off my escape by the window. I had no notion, either, in what part of the room the dressing-table was situated, but the object which had struck me on the thigh as I had fled across the floor had clearly been a corner of the bed. Miss Bisham's nightgown might well be judged an ignoble prize in exchange for all the trouble which had been taken, but at least it would be better than nothing. I stepped back quickly and began passing both hands over the surface of the counterpane.

"What we need," I heard a man's voice shouting on the landing, "is a battering-ram." And there was a note of ferocious pleasure in the thought of the damage which he was about to do to his ancestral home.

"What about this coal-scuttle?" asked a second voice—Rosemary's, I took it. But I was poised on the window-sill now, with the nightgown—an unusually cumbrous garment—knotted round my neck. I lowered myself as carefully as the circumstances allowed. In another moment I was hanging at full length.

"This will be dashed amusing," I thought, "if I break my leg." And the ground certainly appeared a most appalling distance away.

"By Jove!" was my next conclusion. "I *shall* break my leg. Both, probably."

With my arms pressed against the sides of

my head I was in a poor position for using my ears. But no one could possibly have missed the crash with which the coal-scuttle shattered that bedroom door, or the fiendish yells which instantly followed. In the desperate and addle-pated game in which I was engaged, there would be, I was convinced, no mercy for the vanquished. I suddenly recalled an unpleasing moment in an exploit of Sherlock Holmes, where a gentleman in my precise situation had his thumb severed by a blow from an axe. The Bishams, I reflected, would probably think that funny.

And this thought decided me. I shut my eyes and let go.

It's odd how I can't describe the actual fall. I distinctly remember releasing my grip, but from that instant until I found myself tearing across the open space of the drive my mind is a complete blank. Perhaps I was stunned, but, if so, then I can only say that it was one of the shortest cases on record, for the Bishams were still at the window, and as I legged it in the direction of Emma I could hear them addressing me as "Audrey."

"We'll catch you!" they were shouting. "Just you wait till we get old Percy out."

I couldn't quite understand this, though it did flash across my mind that they might be referring to their father. There was, however, little time for idle speculation, and in any case I was much more interested in their immediate assumption that my pretty cousin must be at the bottom of any burglary committed within fifteen miles of her house. It struck me that this belief might well have saved me from being fired at as I ran—and all the Bishams are first-class shots; yet it was difficult to feel entirely satisfied that they should hold it. I wonder if I make my meaning clear?

Meanwhile I continued to run, and the next vision which I recall is Emma's tail-light, and Audrey engaged in what appeared for the moment to be a kind of frenzied dance.

"I can't start her!" she shrieked, as I came galloping up. "I can't make her start!"

"Nonsense," I panted. "She was all right ten minutes ago. Try again."

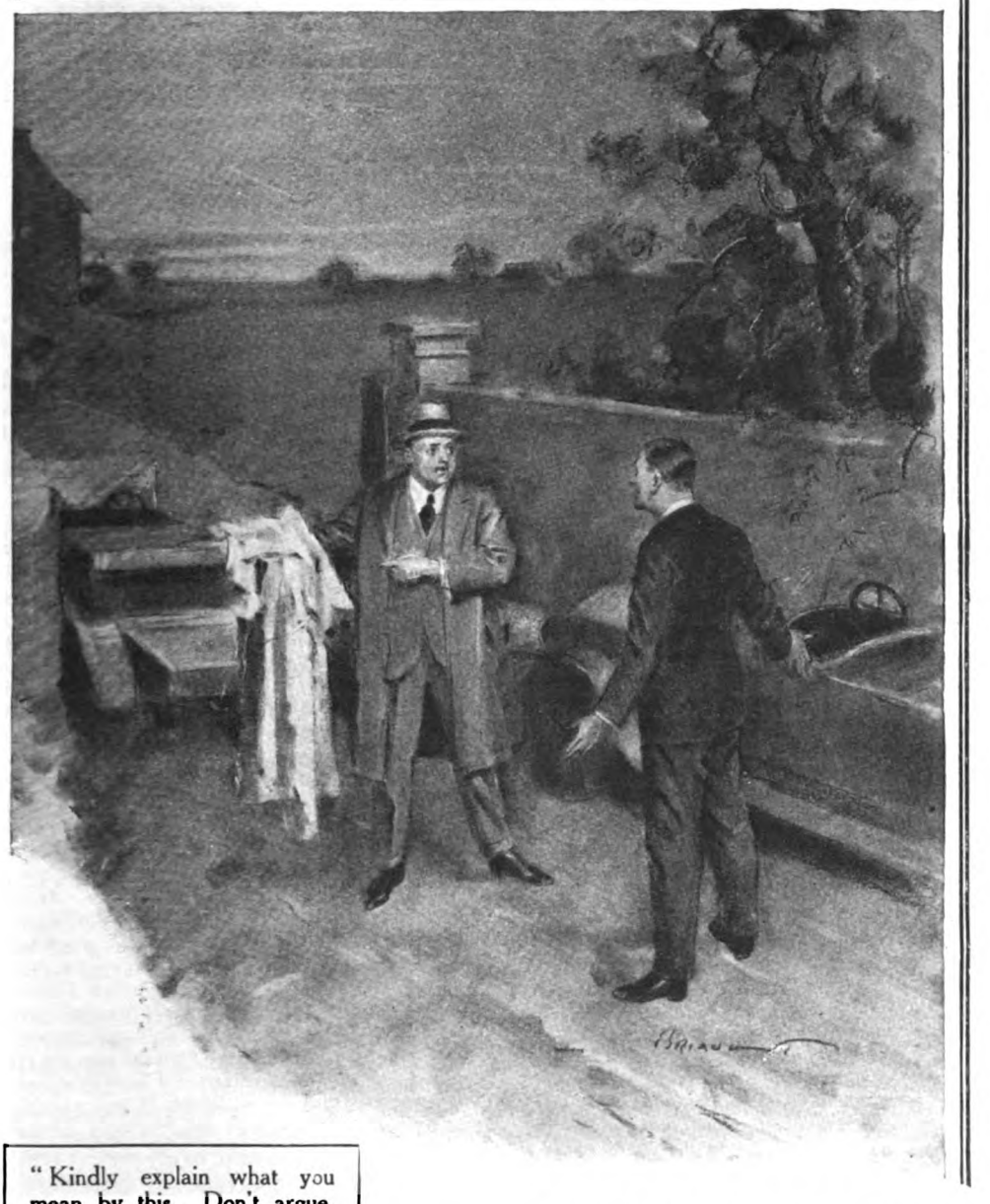
"It's no good, I tell you. You'll have to push."

"I can't," I said.

"You *must!*" she screamed.

Have you ever tried running two hundred yards and then pushing a two-seater uphill? Well, don't.

She did start, though. Once again she gave an explosion which reverberated all over the park; and then I was rushing and



"Kindly explain what you mean by this. Don't argue, sir. Your name is clearly embroidered on this garment."

scrambling and gasping and kicking, and finally I dragged myself on to the top of the closed dickey, while we tore madly up the drive.

"Are you there?" asked my pretty cousin presently, without turning her head.

"I think so," I said.

"Well, don't move. You'll only make me run into something. I say, what did you take?"

I began unwinding the nightgown from my neck. And then:—

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed.

"What's the matter?" asked Audrey.

"It's a man's dressing-gown," I said.

"What?" Our speed suddenly dropped to five miles an hour. "Where did you get it from?"

"Off the bed," I said. "I suppose—— Dash it, I must have gone into the wrong room. I'm afraid—yes, here's the name inside the collar. It's Tom's."

"You owl," said my pretty cousin.

"And he thought I was you," I added. "He'll think—— Oh, I say, Audrey, he'll think you're encouraging him."

"Bother!" said Audrey. And then, as if to herself: "And father's on his side, too."

There was silence for a moment, while I suppose we both faced this unforeseen development of our adventure. And then Audrey suddenly asked:—

"What were they doing when you left?"

"They said they were going to catch you," I answered. "And something about—well, it sounded like 'old Percy.'"

"Old Percy!" she gasped. "That's Tom's car. It can do sixty. *Quick!*"

Down went the foot-accelerator with a bang. I was just in time to clutch at a fold of the hood, and we shot through the open lodge-gates at a speed which would have done credit to Brooklands. Having been admitted to the extraordinary technique of one of Audrey's love-affairs, I had no reason to ask what we were doing—even if I could have found the breath. They play according to rules in that set, and if you steal a man's dressing-gown and he catches you afterwards, he has more than a right to add the point to his score. But Audrey—bless her heart—didn't mean to be caught.

AND thus we rushed, tore, and pelted through the darkness of those deserted lanes, with never a protest from me at the risks we were running. For up through the absurdity of our original escapade there had loomed this lurking threat to my pretty cousin's liberty, and at whatever cost Tom Bisham must never overtake us. Twice, though, as we reluctantly slowed down for corners, I heard far behind us the deep note of a horn.

"Old Percy," said my pretty cousin, through clenched teeth; and away we went once more.

At the next corner the sound failed to reach me.

"We're doing it," I cried.

"We've got to," said Audrey. "I—I tell you I *hate* him."

I cannot deny that these words—however hastily and rashly spoken—filled me with satisfaction. I had come to owe young Mr. Bisham a good deal.

Just inside our own gates there was a second shattering explosion, and we left the roadway with a lurch that nearly wrenched my arms from their sockets.

"Whoa!" said Audrey, and we pulled up in the thick of a laurel bush.

"Tyre's gone," she added. "Listen!"

I jumped down.

"Here he comes," I said, as a horn once more broke the silence. "Let's run for it. You'll never get Emma out of this."

"No," said Audrey, also leaving her seat. "I've got a better idea. Quick! Give me the dressing-gown."

As I handed it to her, she ran swiftly up the bank to the point which, from behind a low wall, overlooks the narrow approach to the drive. I joined her at once.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Watch," she whispered.

The horn sounded just round the corner, and she whirled the dressing-gown over her head.

"Steady on!" I protested. But it was too late. As the head-lights swung into view, she hurled it—with incredible accuracy—straight at the driver's head. It sailed out, caught him slap across the eyes—and the car took the farther gate-post with a sullen crash. It was as neat a piece of work as ever I have seen.

I turned to congratulate her.

"I don't think——" I began. But she seized me by the wrist and clapped her other hand over my mouth. At the same moment I heard an elderly voice giving vent to a pungent and penetrating oath.

"Run!" breathed my pretty cousin, hoarsely. "That wasn't old Percy at all. Don't you hear him? It's father—and Plunkett!"

Yet even as I ducked behind that little wall I caught the sound of old Percy's brakes, and the next instant I tasted the full sweetness of revenge.

"Come here, sir!" my Uncle George was thundering. "Kindly explain what you mean by this." And then, to my joy: "Don't argue, sir. Your name is clearly embroidered on this garment. You shall pay for this, Bisham. You shall pay for it, I say."

And that, so far as Tom Bisham is concerned, is why my pretty cousin remains unmarried.

Confessions of a Humorist

By

JEROME K. JEROME

IV.—AMERICAN REMINISCENCES.

The American interviewer and his ways—"America never walks"—Lecturing in every State in the Union—A story of Sarah Bernhardt—Audiences across the Atlantic—Dining "on the American plan."

"HOW do you like America?"

"Oh," I said, "are we there?"

"Soon will be," he answered. "How do you pronounce your name?"

I told him. He repeated it louder, for the benefit of the others—some dozen of them, grouped around him. They made a note of it.

"What would you say was the difference between English and American humour?"

A chill north wind was blowing, and I hadn't had my breakfast. I did my best.

"These things," I said, "are a natural growth, springing from the soil. In England, to go no farther back than Chaucer——"

Nobody was listening. They were all busy writing. I wondered where they had come from. Out of the sea, apparently. I had been pacing the deck, scanning the horizon for my first sight of New York, and suddenly had found myself in the midst of them. Their spokesman was a thick-set, red-haired gentleman. He had a military manner. The rest were a mixed collection. Some of them looked to me to be mere boys.

"Say, can you tell us a story?"

I stared at him. "A story?" I repeated. "You want me to tell you a story?"

"Why, sure," he answered.

What on earth did they mean? Did they want me to start off and spin them a yarn, at a quarter to eight in the morning? And, if so, was it to be adventure or romance, or just a simple love episode? I had a vision of being, perhaps, expected to sit down in the centre of them, taking the youngest of them on my knee.

He saw I was bewildered. "Anything happened to you on the voyage?" he suggested. "Anything interesting or amusing?"

I had the feeling of a condemned prisoner, reprieved at the last moment. In gratitude, I tried to think of something interesting and amusing that really might have happened to me. Given time, I could have done it. But they stood there waiting with their pencils poised, and I had to fall back upon the truth. I told them the only thing that had happened—that, three days out, we had sighted an iceberg. It was a silly little iceberg. I had mistaken it, myself, for a portion of a wreck; and a man who had been looking at it through a telescope had pronounced it to be a Polar bear. If it had not been for the bar-tender, none of us would have known it was an iceberg. I made the most of it, describing how we had "run before it," and speaking highly of the captain. It appeared in the evening papers under the heading, "The Ice Queen Shows Her Teeth."

We got on better after that. They saw that, at all events, I was trying. I told them how the American woman struck me

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—or rather how I felt sure she was going to strike me when I saw her; and gave them (by request) my opinion of Christopher Columbus, the American drama, the future of California, President Roosevelt, and Elizabeth B. Parker. Who Elizabeth B. Parker was I have never discovered to this day; but that, I take it, is my fault. I gathered her to be one of America's then leading idols (they don't last long); and said that one of my objects in coming to America was to meet her. This seemed to give general satisfaction, and we parted friends.

I make no charge against the American interviewer. One takes the rough with the smooth. I have been described, within the same period of seven months, as a bald-headed elderly gentleman, with a wistful smile; a curly-haired athletic Englishman, remarkable for his youthful appearance; a rickety cigarette-smoking neurotic; and a typical John Bull. Some of them objected to my Oxford drawl; while others catalogued me as a Cockney, and invariably quoted me as dropping my aitches. All of them noticed with unfeigned surprise that I spoke English with an English accent. To anyone visiting America for a rest cure, I can see the American interviewer proving a thorn in the flesh. In pursuit of duty, he makes no bones about awakening you at two o'clock in the morning to ascertain your opinion of the local baseball champion; and on arriving at your hotel, after a thirty-six hours' journey, you may find him waiting for you in your bedroom, accompanied by a flashlight photographer. But not many people, I take it, go to America for their health.

Sooner or later, it occurs to the English literary man that there is money to be made out of lecturing in America. But without the American interviewer to boom us in advance, and work up the local excitement for us when we arrive, we should return with empty pockets. For what I have received in the way of lecturing fees out of America the Lord make me truly thankful to the American interviewer; and may his sins be forgot.

THE most impressive thing in America is New York. Niagara disappointed me. I had some trouble in finding it. The tram conductor promised to let me know when we came to the proper turning, but forgot; and I had to walk back three blocks. I came across it eventually at the bottom of a tea garden belonging to a big hotel. My tour did not permit me to visit the Yellowstone Park. But I saw the Garden of the Gods in Colorado, and it struck me as neglected. The Rockies are imposing, but lack human interest. The prairies are depressing. One has the feeling of being a disembodied spirit, travelling through space and growing doubtful as to one's destination. To the European, what America suffers from is there being too much of it. In Switzerland one winter I met a man from Indianapolis. We were looking out of the window on our way to Grindelwald.

"This would be quite an extensive country," he said, "if it were rolled out flat."

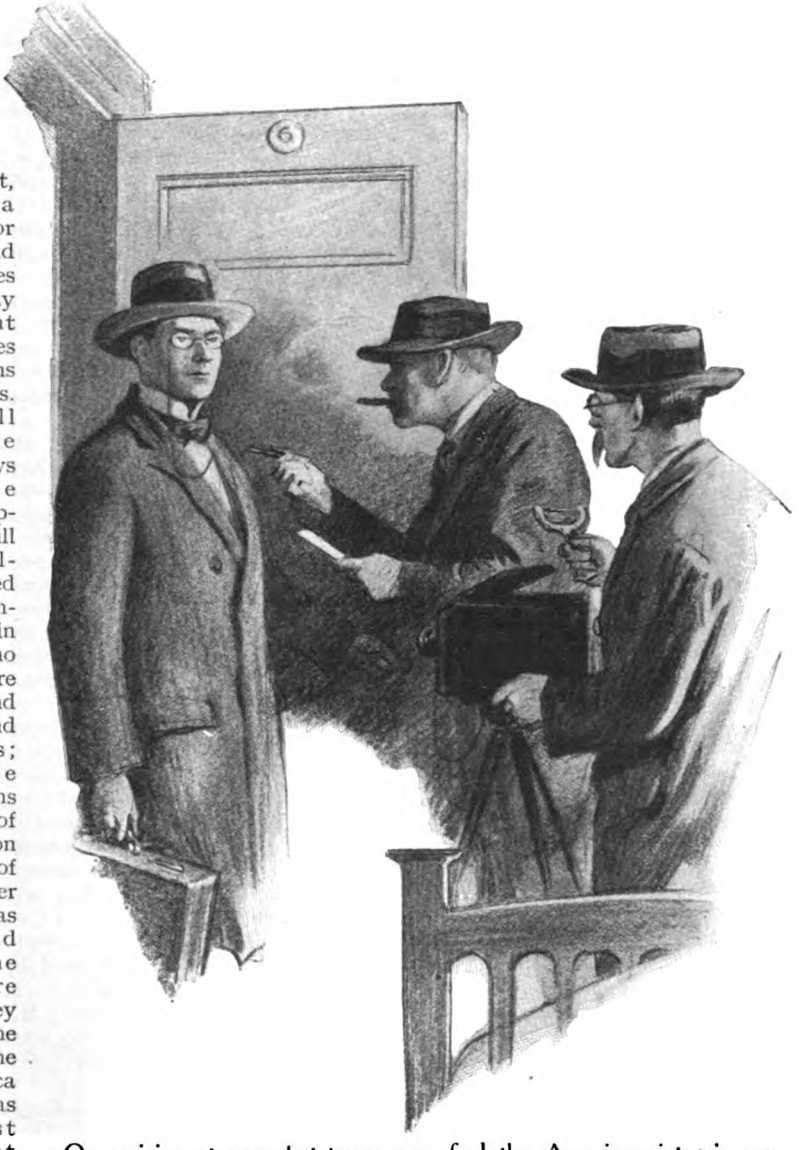
In America everything seems to have been sacrificed to making an extensive country. In Arizona they point out to you the mirage; but to the stranger it still looks like salt. The American lakes are seas surrounded by railways. In New Orleans there are old-world nooks and corners, but these are disappearing. The first thing they do with you in New Orleans is to take you a drive through the cemeteries. There are miles and miles of them. You go in a char-à-banc, and the gentleman with the megaphone draws your attention to the most important tombs. "Seeing New Orleans," they call it.

California is beautiful (one can forget the "movies"). I was in San Francisco the week before the earthquake. My wife and I were the guests of Bancroft, the historian. I shall never forget the kindness of himself and his sweet wife. He took us for drives into the country behind two grand grey horses. He was a splendid whip. One afternoon he proposed an excursion down into the town: "But we will leave your dear little lady to rest herself," he said. And later I understood and was grateful to him. It was a curious experience. During the war, round Verdun, I came across roads that reminded me of that drive. Every few yards we went down into a hole, and often it took the horses all their strength to pull us out. I asked if there had been an earthquake; but my host said no. For years the roads had never been repaired, the mayor and corporation ("Grafters" they are termed in America) having found another use for the money.

In Florida one seems to have dropped back into antediluvian times, or, to be more exact, the third day of the Creation, before God had quite finished separating the dry land from the waters; and creeping things sat about, wondering which they were.

Virginia has an atmosphere and speaks English; but the new towns in the Middle States, with their painted canvas "Broadways," suggest a Wild West exhibition at Earl's Court. One looks instinctively for the sign-board pointing to the switchback. Here and there New England reminds one of

the old country. I forget who it was said he would like to come back and see America when it was finished. One has the fancy that, returning in a thousand years or so, one might find there little cottages standing in gay gardens, pleasant rambling houses amid soft lawns and kindly trees. But there will never rise the clustering chimneys with the blue smoke curling upward. America will still be central-heated. I missed the friendly chimneys. Elsewhere in America there is no country. There are summer resorts and garden cities and health centres; and just outside the great towns long avenues of "homes," each on its parallelogram of land. The larger ones have verandas and towers and gables; and the smaller ones are painted red. They told me that the reason why all the houses in America are painted red was that the Trust made red paint only. You can paint your house red or leave it alone, according to your taste and fancy. In America a man who wants to paint his house any other colour than red is called a Radical. America never walks. I am told that now every fifth American owns an automobile and the other four crowd in. In my time you took a surface car. I used to dream of going for a walk, and when I asked my way they would direct me to go straight on till I came to Nine Hundred and Ninety-ninth Street—or some such number—and there I would find the car.



On arriving at your hotel you may find the American interviewer waiting for you in your bedroom, accompanied by a flashlight photographer.

"But I want to walk," I would explain.

"Well, I'm telling you," they would reply; "you walk to the end of the block. The car starts from round the corner."

"But I don't want the car," I would persist. "I want to walk—all the way."

Then they would dive into their pocket and press a twenty-five-cent piece into my

hand and hurry off to catch their own car.

But New York reminds you of nothing, suggests no comparison. New York is America epitomized; fierce, tireless, blatant if you will, but great. Nature stands abashed before it. The sea crawls round it, dwarfed, insignificant. Trees, like waving grasses, spring from its crevices. The clouds are rent upon its pinnacles.

It strikes a new note. Behind the mere bigness is a new idea; something that you feel is tremendously important. You worry for a time, wondering. And then suddenly it springs upon you. In London, Paris, Rome —go where you will in the Old World, it is the great cathedral, the spires of a hundred churches, the minarets, towers, domes, the theatres and palaces that pierce the skyline; that rise serene above the market-place, the by-ways of the money-changers. In New York it is Business Triumphant that towers to heaven, dominating, unchallenged. The sky-scraper alone is visible. Religion, art: they have their hiding-places round its feet.

In a town of the Middle West a kind man put me up. He was rich and had one child, a daughter Margaret, who was the apple of his eye. She was twelve years old at the time, She had her own banking account, and drew her own cheques. I remember a conversation between them one evening. He had just returned home from his office; and she had fetched him his house shoes and was sitting on his knee.

"I brought off a good stroke of business to-day, Maggie," he said to her, while stroking her hair. "So I paid five thousand dollars into your account. How do you propose to invest it?"

The child sat for a while with puckered brows, one arm about his neck.

"Well," she answered at length, "if, as the papers say, there is going to be a famine in Russia this winter, hadn't I better put it into wheat?"

He kissed her.

"That's right," he answered. "I'll fix it up for you in the morning."

I HAVE made three American tours. It was offered to me to make a fourth just after the war. My agent assured me there would be no difficulty about drinks. But there were other reasons also, and I shirked it. The first must be twenty years ago by now. That it was not as profitable to me as it might have been was my own fault. Never in my life have I felt so lost and lonesome as during my first days in New York. Everything was so strange, so appallingly "foreign." I had never been outside Europe before. Never, so it seemed to me, would I be able to adapt myself to the ways and customs of the country. And then there was the language problem. In Vevey, on Lake Leman, there sits cross-legged—or used to sit—a smiling, small Italian shoeblack; behind him, on the wall, a placard with this wording: "English spoken—American understood." I thought of him as I wandered bewildered through the New York streets, and wondered how long it had taken him.

At the end of a fortnight I cabled what would now be called an S.O.S. to my wife, and she, gallant little lady, came to my help.

And she it was who persuaded me to further extravagance, as is the way of women. Major Pond, or rather his good widow, had booked me a stupendous tour. It took in every State in the Union, together with Canada and British Columbia. Five readings a week, the average worked out, each to last an hour and twenty minutes. I showed my wife the list. She said nothing at the time, but went about behind my back and got round my agents. Among them they decided that, to avoid a funeral, I had best have help; and found one Charles Battell Loomis. He was, I think, the ugliest man I have met. But that was only the outside of him. All the rest of him was beautiful, and sad I am to have to speak of him in the past tense. Through him I came to know the other America—the America of the dreamers, the thinkers, the idealists. He took me to see them in their shabby clubs; to dine with them in their fifty-cent restaurants; to spend fine Sundays with them in their wooden shanties, far away where the tram-lines end. He was a wonderful actor, but had never been able to afford a Press agent. His writings, as scattered through the magazines, were mildly amusing, but that was all. Until he stood up before an audience and read them: when at once they became the most humorous stories in American literature. He made no gestures: his face, but for the eyes, might have been carved out of wood. His genius was in his marvellous voice. His least whisper could be heard across the largest hall.

I envied him. The lecturer through America has to cultivate adaptability. For one night a rich man would hire us to read to his guests in a drawing-room. He was always very kind, and would make us feel part of the party. The next evening we would find ourselves booked to perform in a hall the size of Solomon's Temple, taking Mr. H. G. Wells's figures as correct. There was a "Coliseum," I think they called it, down South. I forget the name of the town. But I am sure it was down South, because of the cotton that floated on the wind and turned our hair grey. Even Loomis had found the place difficult. The first few dozen rows must have heard him. Anyhow,

they laughed. But beyond and above brooded the silence of the grave. By rare chance, we had a few hours to spare the next morning; and coming across the place, I stepped in, wondering how it looked in daylight. Men were busy hauling scenery about. It served for all purposes: mass meetings, theatrical performances, religious revivals, prize fights. On one wet fourth of July a display of fireworks had been given there with great success. A small lady in black was standing just inside the door, likewise inspecting. It was Sarah Bernhardt. She was billed to play there that evening. She was finishing a tour with a few one-night stands, and had been travelling all night. She recognized me, though we had met only once before, at a Lyceum supper in Irving's time.

"My God!" she said, throwing up her arms. "Why, it's as deep as hell! How do they expect me to reach them?"

"They don't," I told her. "They want to see you, that's all. They are a curious people, these Americans. They paid last night to see me. They must have known they would not hear me."

"But they will not see her," she answered. "They will see only a little old woman. I am not Sarah Bernhardt until I act. It would be a swindle."

"Well, isn't that their affair?" I suggested.

She drew herself up. She was quite tall when she had finished—or looked it.

"No, my friend," she answered, "it is mine. Sarah Bernhardt is a great artiste. And I am her faithful servant. They shall not make a show of her."

She held out her hand. "Please do not tell anyone that you have seen me," she said. She drew down her veil and slipped out.

What actually happened I do not know. They were posting notices up when we left, announcing with regret Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's sudden indisposition.

I have always found American audiences most kind. Their chief fault is that they see the point before you get there, which is disconcerting. One morning I woke up speechless with a sudden cold. I could not even use the 'phone. I telegraphed to my chairman, explaining, and asking him to call the reading off. In half an hour the answer came back: "Sorry you won't be able to read, but do come, or it will be a real disappointment to us. We want to see you and thank you for the pleasure your books have given us. As for fee, that has been posted to your agent and is too unimportant a matter to be talked about among friends."

I went and had a delightful evening. They put me in the middle of the room and entertained me. We had music and songs and stories. I whispered a few to my chairman, and he translated them. They turned the whole thing into a joke. At the end, one of them, a doctor, gave me a draught to take in bed. I wish I had asked him what it was. My cold was gone the next morning.

At Salt Lake City we ought to have arrived with an hour to spare, instead of which our train was three hours late. A deputation met us on the platform with hot coffee and sandwiches. They put us into cabs and took us straight to the platform. An audience of three thousand people had been waiting patiently for two hours. Our chairman, in

"English spoken —American understood."

his opening, apologized to us for the train service, and asked everybody to agree that, as we must be tired, we should be asked to read for only half an hour, unless we felt ourselves equal to more. Both Loomis and myself felt bucked up, and gave them the full programme. Not one of them left before the end, which must have been about twelve o'clock; and if they didn't like it, they were good actors.

A leading Elder put us up in Salt Lake City. He introduced us to his wife. He noticed I was looking expectant.

"There are no more," he explained. He put his arm round her. "The modern American woman," he continued, "has convinced us that one wife is sufficient for any man."

I was told that domestic establishments on a more generous basis still existed; but they were rare, and later on the law put an end to them.

It is difficult to know what your audience really thinks of you. Even if bored, I feel convinced they would pretend to be enjoying themselves. There are times when hypocrisy can be a virtue. But hidden behind a newspaper in a smoking car, I once overheard praise of myself.

"Were you at the lecture last night?" asked one man of another.

"Yes," came the answer in a soft, low, drawling voice. "The wife thought she'd like to go. I'd never heard of him myself."

"What was he like?"

"Well"—there was a pause—I guessed he was fixing a plug of tobacco—"for an Englishman—good."

AMERICAN hospitality is proverbial. If I had taken the trouble to arrange matters beforehand, I could have travelled all over America without once putting up at an hotel. Had I known what they were like, I would have made the effort. In the larger cities they are generally of palatial appearance. If their cooking and attendance were on a par with their architecture and appointments, there would be no fault to find with them. But often I have thought how gladly I would exchange all the Parian marble in my bath-room, all the silver fittings in my dressing-room, for a steak I could cut with a knife. It appears from the statistics of the Immigration Bureau that there arrive every year in the United States well over four thousand professional cooks. What becomes of them remains a mystery. They cannot all become cinema actors.

On the great routes, European customs prevail; but in the smaller towns hotels are still run on what is termed the "American plan." A few days after landing in New York I went to Albany to give a reading. I was due on the platform at eight. I did not have any lunch. I thought I would dine early and afterwards sit quiet. I put out my clothes and came downstairs. The dining-room was empty. There didn't seem to be any bell. I found the gentleman who had sent me up to my room. He was sitting in a rocking-chair, reading a newspaper.

"I beg your pardon," I said, "but are you the hotel clerk?"

"Yup," he grunted, and went on reading.

"I am sorry to disturb you," I continued, "but I want the head waiter."

"What do you want him for?" he said. "Friend of yours?"

"No," I answered. "I want to order dinner."

He was still reading his newspaper. "You haven't got to order it," he said. "It will be ready at half-past six."

"But I want it now," I said. The time was a little after four.

He put down his paper and looked at me.

"Say, where do you come from?" he asked me.

"I have come from New York," I answered him.

"You ain't been even there long," he commented. "Englishman, aren't you?"

I admitted it.

He rose and laid a kindly hand on my shoulder.

"You run along and take a look round the town," he said. "Interesting city. Anyhow, there's nothing else for you to do till half-past six."

I followed his advice. It wasn't really an interesting city. Or maybe I was not in the mood. At six o'clock I came back and dressed. I was feeling hungry. When I saw the "Menu" I felt hungrier still. It would have made Lucullus sit up and smile. It covered two closely-written pages, and contained, so far as I could judge, every delicacy in and out of season.

I ordered caviare and clam soup, to open with. I was doubtful about the clam soup, being new to it. But if too rich, I could just toy with it. The waiter, a youthful gentleman who apparently had mislaid his coat, remained standing.

"I'll think of the next thing to follow," I said, "while you are getting that."

"Better think of it now," he said. "We haven't got the time to spare over here that you have in the old country."

I did not want to antagonize him. I took up the menu again. I ordered whitebait to follow the soup. I told him I liked them crisp. A slice of broiled ham with truffles. Peas in butter. Lamb cutlet with tomatoes. Asparagus. Chicken (I mentioned I preferred the wing). A caramel ice cream.

Dessert, assorted. Coffee, of course, to finish up with.

I was sorry to miss all the rest; but I had to think of my lecture. Even as it was I feared I had overdone it.

"That all?" asked the coatless young gentleman.

I thought he meant to be sarcastic, and put a touch of asperity into my tone.

"That is the order," I said.

He was gone longer than I had expected. When he reappeared he was carrying a sort of butler's tray. He put it down in front of me, straightened out the four sides, and left me.

There was everything on it—everything I had ordered, beginning with the caviare and ending with the coffee. All the things (except the soup and the coffee) were on little white saucers, all the same size. The whole thing suggested a doll's tea-party. The soup was in a little white pot with a handle. That also might have been part of the furnishing of a doll's house. One drank it out of the pot—about a tablespoonful altogether. There were thirteen whitebait and one shrimp. Seventeen peas. Three sticks of asparagus. Five grapes and four nuts (assorted). Two square inches of ham but no truffle; the thing I took for the truffle turned out to be a fly. The lamb cutlet I could not place. I fancy they must have given me the wrong end. The tomato I lost, trying to cut it. It rolled off the table and I hadn't the heart to follow it up. For some reason or another they had fried the chicken. I did my best but had to put it back. It didn't look any different. I wondered afterwards what happened to it.

I suppose it was not having had any lunch. If I had been by myself, I'd have put my head down on the tray and cried. But three or four other men were feeding near me and I pulled myself together. I started with the coffee. It was still lukewarm. It seemed a pity to let it get quite cold. The caviare did not appeal to me. It may have been the smell. After the coffee I tackled the ice cream, which by that time was already half melted. I stole a glance at my companions. None of them was bothering about a knife. They were just picking up things with a fork, first from one saucer and then from another. Somehow they suggested the idea of mechanical chickens. But it seemed the simplest plan, and I followed their example.

I never got used to it. Natives, to whom occasionally I talked upon the subject, admitted that, considered as an art, the "European plan" of dining might be preferable; but would hasten to explain that America was "too busy"—the spry American citizen had not the time for all these social monkey tricks.

"I beg your pardon," I said, "but are you the hotel clerk?" "Yup," he grunted, and went on reading.

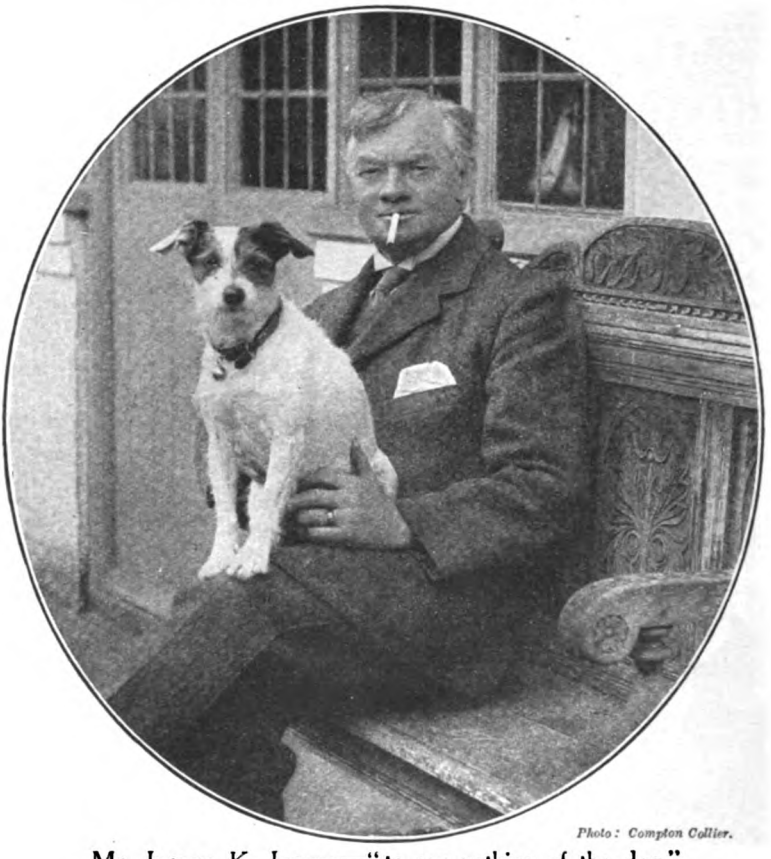


Photo: Compton Collier.

Mr. Jerome K. Jerome—"to say nothing of the dog."

I would leave them, settling themselves into their rocking-chairs, ranged round the hotel lounge, preparing to light their cigars and shape their plugs of tobacco. On my return, some two or three hours later, they would still be there, smoking and spitting.

America can be proud of her railways. An American train with its majestic engine and its thousand feet of steel cars is a fine sight. Always we were glad to get into them, away from the comfortless hotels, where one is harassed by the bell boy, bullied by the waiter, and patronized by the clerk. The darkie porter welcomes one with a smile, and is not above being courteous. It is only in the dining-car that one can hope for a decently-cooked meal. In the sleeping-car there is no telephone over one's bed, no patent improved radiator to go wrong and keep one awake all night. There are stretches where for miles one can look out of the window without being pestered with advertisements. But one knows one is nearing a town by the hoardings each side of the track. Except on a few main routes, punctuality is rare. There is excuse. The distances are enormous. The permanent-ways are still in the making. Nature plays her tricks upon them. One does not bother about time-tables—the "schedule," as they call it. One waits until the message is sent round the town from the depot that the train is signalled. One day, to my amazement, my train came in on time. It was at a junction. I had just got out of the branch train and was wondering what I should do with myself. The stationmaster was passing by.

"Any notion when she is likely to turn up?" I asked him—"the eleven-thirty-three for Sioux Falls?" It was then a minute past the half-hour.

"Hurry up," he said; "she's coming in now."

She glided in as he was speaking, and drew up with a soft, low sigh as of self-satisfied content. He was a big, genial man. He looked at my face and laughed.

"It's all right," he said; "to be quite candid, this is yesterday's train."

(*To be concluded.*)

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS, AND MADELON.—No. 5.

The Royal Game

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

"TOO bad!" Mr. Billingham murmured, sympathetically.

Madelon was almost angry. She leaned across the table towards her companion.

"Speak to him, please," she begged. "It is impossible that we go on like this. It becomes an affair of charity. You dispense the money. Nobody earns anything. He thinks and dreams and talks of nothing but roulette. You wished him to make some inquiries about those people at Nice. He did nothing."

"Well, they've gone now, anyway," her companion remarked.

"Will you speak to him?" she persisted.

"Right away," Mr. Billingham promised. "Here he comes. Now you shall hear for yourself."

"Do not be too easy with him," she enjoined.

"Leave that to me," was the confident reply.

The Marquis drifted in from the Arcade to the glass-sheltered bar. He was happy and spruce. He had a mille's worth of counters in his pocket and the music of the whirling wheel in his ears. He greeted his niece and his friend with gay cordiality.

"A minute or two late, I fear," he apologized. "Let mine be the pleasure. Waiter!"

An approved order was given. The Marquis accepted a chair.

"Mr. Billingham has something to say to you, uncle," Madelon confided.

"A little matter of business which arises, eh?" the Marquis asked. "Well, I am at your disposal."

"As a matter of fact," Mr. Billingham declared, "neither your niece nor I have had any fortune for the last few weeks, and, to put it bluntly, funds are running low. We think that it is time you bestirred yourself."

"Indeed, yes, uncle," Madelon intervened. "You spend morning, noon, and night at the tables. You make no acquaintances. You take no initiative."

"You being, so to speak," Mr. Billingham went on, "the social bird of the party, we expect you to be more in evidence."

The Marquis gulped down his cocktail.

"You think that I am neglecting our interests—our joint interests?" he demanded, in a hurt tone.

"That idea has occurred to us," Mr. Billingham admitted.

"There is no doubt about it," Madelon said, coldly.

The Marquis made signs to the waiter.

"I am," he announced, "in a position to prove that you have misjudged me. I have, in our joint interests, made the acquaintance of two gentlemen who possess the most amazing gifts. They need fresh blood and—er—introductions. I am arranging to provide them with both."

"What may their gifts be?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

"They are expert poker-players," the Marquis explained. "Their knowledge of the game is indeed wonderful. Amongst my

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acquaintances there are several wealthy men to whom the tables are no longer a novelty. A game of cards amuses. I have promised to arrange something, to play myself, to bring you. We are to put up nothing, and we are to have a third of the winnings."

Mr. Billingham sighed.

"Are your friends clever enough to put this through?" he asked.

"One of them," the Marquis confided, "was a professional entertainer for some years. His speciality was card tricks. The other learned the game upon an Atlantic liner."

"It is a primitive form of misappropriation, this," Mr. Billingham sighed, "but it depends, of course, upon the measure of skill which your friends possess. Invite them to a rehearsal. Have you pointed me out to them yet?"

"Not yet," the Marquis admitted.

"Bring them along to my sitting-room to-night, after dinner," Mr. Billingham enjoined. "Introduce me as an American tourist upon his travels, one of the jay birds with plenty of the dough. You may say that I only play a low game, but after a few whiskies-and-sodas I like to increase the stakes. I'll figure it out myself then if they're to be trusted."

The Marquis looked a little doubtful.

"You will lose your money," he ventured, "and it may not be possible to explain afterwards."

"Guess I'll fix that," Mr. Billingham promised. "Bring your friends along, and I'll see what's doing."

WHEN he ascended to his sitting-room that evening after dinner, Mr. Billingham prepared to dispense hospitality on a generous scale. There were two packs of unopened cards upon a green baize table, whiskies-and-sodas and a box of cigars upon the sideboard, besides a variety of liqueurs. Presently there was a knock at the door, and in response to Mr. Billingham's hearty invitation to enter there appeared the Marquis, Madelon, and the Marquis's two friends, whom he introduced as Mr. Conrad Adler and Mr. Blane T. Hackett, of St. Louis. Mr. Conrad Adler was a trifle Semitic. He was possessed of a black moustache and curly black hair, and he wore tortoiseshell glasses. Mr. Blane T. Hackett was of a different type—florid, large, and more American than Mr. Billingham himself. His hand-shake was painful, his tone almost vociferous. He eyed the preparations for the evening's entertainment with approval.

"Our friend, Mr. Adler," the Marquis explained, "is in the wine trade. He travels a great deal. Mr. Hackett is like yourself—an American bent on pleasure."

"And very glad to meet a fellow-countryman over on this side," Mr. Hackett declared, cordially. "You still in business, sir?"

"Only partly," Mr. Billingham confessed. "Linoleum."

"Boots," Mr. Hackett confided—"the Hackett Boot Company, out at St. Louis. I guess I'm like you—get tired of these foreign games. The sight of a couple of decks of cards and a few chips looks good to me. Shall we make it a small game?"

"Fifty francs ante and a hundred francs rise?" Mr. Billingham suggested. "Will you join us, Marquis?"

"With pleasure," the latter assented.

The four men sat down. Mr. Billingham distributed the chips and accepted the money. A waiter, who made an unobtrusive appearance, served drinks and passed the cigars. The game proceeded, and it was very soon apparent that it was proceeding very contrary to the expectations of Mr. Conrad Adler and his friend. On one occasion, when the former had shown, with a half-apologetic air, four eights, having drawn three cards, and Mr. Billingham with a quiet chuckle had laid down four knaves, an explosion appeared to be imminent. The game was continued, however, although with the exception of their host the players became more and more silent. At the end of an hour the whole of the chips lay in front of Mr. Billingham. That gentleman paused to light a cigar.

"Seems to me I got all the luck to-night," he remarked. "What do you say, gentlemen—shall we raise the stakes a bit? The game seems kinder quiet."

Mr. Conrad Adler glanced at his watch.

"I got to go," he mumbled. "I forgot I had an appointment over at the Casino."

There was an expression of pain upon Mr. Hackett's face.

"I'll be getting along, too," he announced stiffly. "I don't seem to quite get the hang of this game."

"Eh?" Mr. Billingham ejaculated with ferocious emphasis.

Mr. Hackett opened his mouth and closed it again. His eyes were fixed upon the pile of counters in front of Mr. Billingham's place and the little roll of bills underneath his tumbler.

"Fact of it is," Mr. Hackett confided, "I don't think I know enough about this game for the present company."

"You'll learn," Mr. Billingham assured him cheerfully. "Any day that you feel like a little lesson, make the stakes worth while and I'll show you. Have another cigar before you go."

The two men took their leave, crestfallen, suspicious, and a little vituperative. The Marquis looked at his friend and gasped. Madelon came over and patted him on the shoulder.

"Clever dear!" she murmured.

"Say, that was nothing at all," Mr. Billingham assured her lightly. "Watch me!"

He threw a pack of cards into the air, brought one down from the ceiling, another from the sleeve of Madelon's dress, and a third from the back of his collar.

"Just a little lesson for you, Marquis," he said. "Now I'm going to let you have it straight. Card-sharping don't come inside our little scheme of life. Do you get that?"

"It really seems," Madelon sighed, "as though with gifts like yours some profitable use should be made of them."

"My dear," Mr. Billingham protested, "cheating at cards is a low-down game. We're out for adventures all right, but we're out to skin the worthless rich, and to skin 'em our own way. You take my advice, Marquis, and don't you be seen speaking to that pair of crooks again. They'll get found out the first time they try a serious game with any man who knows his way about."

"But you are so much cleverer than they are," Madelon expostulated. "Couldn't you get hold of some really terrible people and win just a little of their money? I saw the most beautiful chinchilla cape yesterday, and so cheap!"

Mr. Billingham was playing idly with the cards.

"Do you," he asked the Marquis, "happen to know Mme. Groosens?"

The Marquis shivered.

"The good God forbid!" he exclaimed.

"That horrible creature!" Madelon cried. "Everyone in the Club and at the Casino, too, hates her. She claims everyone's stakes. She's always trying to bully the croupiers—an unspeakable person!"

"She has no friends," Mr. Billingham remarked, "and therefore to make her acquaintance should be easy. I heard her say that she preferred bridge and poker to all that gambling. Here is your task, Marquis. Make her acquaintance and bring her with two or three absolutely respectable people to a little game of poker. There shall be no cheating, but something might come of it."

"It is a horrible task," the Marquis complained, with a little shiver, "but I must confess that you intrigue me."

"See about it, then," Mr. Billingham enjoined, "and, by the by, you might remember this: another ten days at the most sees our exchequer dry. I do not know what you have saved out of your share of our little adventures—you have perhaps added to them by your roulette wins—but as a co-operative society we're on the rocks."

The Marquis rose to his feet.

"I will take a stroll through the Club," he observed.

"We will follow," Mr. Billingham agreed. "I feel like a little flutter myself."

THE roulette room of the Club was crowded. Around the principal table people were standing two and three deep. Madelon touched Mr. Billingham on the arm. Almost opposite was the woman of whom they had spoken. They watched her for some moments. She was short and inclined to be fat, expensively dressed, and with a profusion of jewellery. Her face was heavy and pallid, her mouth disagreeable, her eyes acquisitive. With her sallow pendulous cheeks and occasional glimpses of ill-shaped teeth, she was irresistibly reminiscent of a soft and pudgy insect.

"They call her 'the Yellow Slug,'" Madelon whispered. "Watch her now."

She stood with a plaque in her hand, as though uncertain whether or not to risk it. People on either side of her made their stakes. Still she hesitated. The wheel spun, the number was announced. There was a plaque, placed some time previously, almost in front of her upon the table.

"*Un cheval à moi*," she called out shrilly to the croupier.

An Englishwoman seated on the same side of the table protested.

"Madame is mistaken," she exclaimed indignantly. "The plaque was mine."

There was the usual controversy. Mme. Groosens ejaculated, shouted, pushed, and finally seized the money. The croupier looked remorseful. The *chef* awaited an appeal. The woman to whom the money belonged shrugged her shoulders.

"It is not worth while," was her only comment.

"Absolute robbery," Madelon murmured, as Mme. Groosens thrust the plaques into her gold bag and left the table.

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"I'm glad we saw that," he declared. "Mademoiselle, I take my hat off to your uncle. Behold!"

The Marquis was offering his commiserations. It was most annoying to have one's stake claimed. He was glad that madame had courage. These people who were not *habituées* threw down their plaques right and left and claimed everything.

"Uncle is really doing his best," Madelon whispered.

"He is earning good money," Mr. Billingham assented.

THE second poker party in Mr. Billingham's room came off within the next few evenings. It consisted of Mr. Billingham himself, the Marquis, Mme. Groosens, and two perfectly respectable acquaintances of the Marquis—Mme. de Bernande, a well-known resident of Monte Carlo, and Lord Henerford, whom the Marquis had once met in Paris and who was also a well-known *habitué*. The presence of Mme. Groosens appeared to be somewhat of a surprise, and Mme. de Bernande's greeting was cool in the extreme. The Marquis, however, who figured as host, exerted all his tact to create a feeling of friendliness.

"Seems deuced odd to be playing poker down here," Lord Henerford remarked. "One does get rather fed up with these other games, though."

"I play poker at my villa once a week," Mme. de Bernande announced. "Some of you must join me there one evening. I expect your friend Mr. Billingham plays very well—most Americans do."

"Nothing out of the way, madame," Mr. Billingham assured her. "When I was in business in New York we used to play Saturday nights at the Country Club, and I played coming across on the steamer."

"A risky proceeding," Lord Henerford murmured.

"I guess I can generally size people up," Mr. Billingham declared. "Besides, the gangs who work the steamers are pretty well-known. I wouldn't say they had much chance—on the Southern route, anyway."

The game proceeded without event. The Marquis and Mr. Billingham were excellent joint hosts and they kept the conversation from flagging. Sandwiches and other forms of refreshment were handed around and Lord Henerford declared that Mr. Billingham's cigars were the best he had smoked in Monte Carlo. As the evening wore on Mr. Billingham more than once showed signs of some perturbation. He looked at his cards on several occasions before he threw them in, and he paid marked attention to Mme. Groosens' play. She, to her intense satisfaction, became in time almost the only winner. A pile of chips and counters was gathered in front of her, by the side of her gold bag. Her little eyes twinkled, her covetous mouth was twisted into a satisfied smile. Mme. de Bernande whispered at last in Madelon's ear.

"My dear, what induced your uncle to ask that horrible woman here? She robs everyone downstairs and makes life a torment to the croupiers."

"My uncle is very good-natured," Madelon sighed, "but indeed she almost invited herself."

Mr. Billingham was dealing. A very considerable jack-pot had been opened and it was Mme. Groosens' turn to take cards.

"Three," she demanded.

Mr. Billingham threw three cards face downwards upon the table. Mme. Groosens apparently discarded three and held out her hand to draw the three which had been given her. Suddenly Madelon, who was standing by the fireplace, dropped a tumbler with a little crash. Everyone started and looked round. There was a moment's pause. Then Mr. Billingham's voice rang out, clear and sharp.

"Madame," he insisted, "don't move! Don't touch your cards!"

His left hand suddenly imprisoned hers.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "I regret to say that Mme. Groosens has been cheating. I have been watching her for some time. Now I am convinced."

The woman was absolutely incapable of speech. She glared at her accuser with an expression of blank and utter amazement. The natural venom of her face, however, destroyed its innocence.

"Don't move!" Mr. Billingham repeated. "I gave you three cards. Lord Henerford, be so good as to see how many lie in front of madame."

"Only two," Lord Henerford declared.

"Now lift her reticule."

Lord Henerford did as he was bidden.

"There is another card there," he said, producing it.

"That," Mr. Billingham pointed out, "is the third card. Now lift that handkerchief which has been lying on the table by her side all the time."

Lord Henerford obeyed. Underneath the handkerchief another card was concealed.

"Now, madame, show your hand," Mr. Billingham ordered.

Mme. Groosens, still speechless, did as she was told. She held a pair of aces. In obedience to a gesture, Lord Henerford turned up the card under the handkerchief. It was another ace.

"The trick is a simple one," Mr. Billingham explained. "I've seen it done on the steamer more than once. I never expected to see it in company like this. When I gave her three cards, madame discarded one, but pushed it with her sleeve under the reticule. She was helping herself to the one underneath the handkerchief, which had been waiting there for the occasion—the third ace. You see? She would have scooped the pool."

Mme. Groosens found words at last. Her abuse was violent, her statements vehement,

Mme. Groosens commenced stuffing her winnings into her bag. The Marquis, however, held her wrist. "Madame," he insisted, "this is a serious affair. You must kindly leave that money where it is."

but both seemed utterly futile. Everyone listened to her coldly.

"If Mme. Groosens had not kept that ace underneath her handkerchief, if she had not put it there herself, who else would have been likely to?" Mr. Billingham demanded. "Everyone saw me give three cards upon the table. How did that third card—the one she wanted to get rid of—get underneath her reticule?"

Mme. Groosens sprang to her feet and commenced stuffing her winnings into her bag. The Marquis, however, held her wrist.

"Madame," he insisted, "this is a serious affair. You must kindly leave that money where it is."

"You, ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Billingham added, moving towards the bell, "are the best judges of what should be done. I suggest that I send for the manager of the hotel and a representative of the Casino."

MME. GROOSENS sat down heavily. She had a sudden and an awful vision of the joy with which this substantiated charge against her would be received. She had a vision of life without Monte Carlo. She shook in every limb.

"It is all a mistake!" she gasped.

"Mistakes of such a nature," the Marquis commented, "do not occur."

"You can take your money," Mme. Groosens exclaimed passionately—"take it back. I am innocent, but this shall not be spoken of. You can have your money. I will go!"

Mr. Billingham walked to the door, locked it, and returned with the key in his pocket.

"Mme. de Bernande," he said, "and you, Lord Henerford, I am an American and I don't quite know how you treat a case like this. I guess I'd be glad of some advice."

"The woman should be punished. She should be exposed," Mme. de Bernande declared.

"Without a doubt something should be done," Lord Henerford assented, helping himself to a whisky-and-soda.

"But I never touched the cards," Mme. Groosens protested hysterically. "I took what were given to me."

"I guess you may as well cut that out," Mr. Billingham said shortly. "I am a man who is accustomed to be believed, and I tell you to your face that I have seen you cheat, and so have the others."

"There is no possible doubt about it," Mme. de Bernande agreed.

Mme. Groosens leaned back in the chair, distracted, vicious, impotent. Mr. Billingham took the pile of notes and counters and divided them into heaps. He returned to each an equal portion.

"I guess that leaves us pretty well as we were," he pointed out. "The next thing for us to decide is what ought we to do about this lady."

"Do about me?" she gasped. "You've taken my money. You've lied about me. You've insulted me——"

"She is always like this," the Marquis interrupted, with an apologetic little gesture. "We have had warning enough below from the croupiers."

"If you think, madame," Mr. Billingham said, sternly, "that you're going to get out of this scot-free, you're making a big mistake. I guess you've run up against the wrong crowd this time. How much you've made by cheating people all your life as you tried to cheat us to-night, no one can tell, but some of those dollars you're going to refund. That's a sure thing!"

"This is interesting," the Marquis remarked. "What do you propose?"

"I propose, ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Billingham continued, "that we adopt one of two courses. We either publish an account of what has transpired this evening socially and to the managers of the Casino and the Sporting Club, who, I am inclined to believe, would welcome such information, or we fine madame a certain sum which shall be entrusted to one of us for distribution amongst certain approved charities."

"I," Mme. de Bernande said, "am in favour of reporting madame to the authorities."

"I, on the other hand," the Marquis intervened, "am not absolutely certain that that would entirely exclude her from the use of the Rooms. I am therefore in favour of making her pay."

"And I, if I have a voice in the matter," Madelon echoed.

"I should make her stump up," Lord Henerford agreed. "Touch 'em through their pockets more readily than in any other way."

"That goes, then," Mr. Billingham decided. "Madame, on receipt of a cheque for two thousand pounds, which I shall devote to certain charities which I have already in my mind, you may leave this room. If you hesitate for more than twenty seconds I shall ring the bell and ask for the manager."

Mme. Groosens hesitated for less than twenty. She wrote the cheque and she left the room, with a venomous backward glance which few of them ever forgot. The little party broke up soon afterwards, leaving Mr. Billingham, the Marquis, and Madelon alone. Mr. Billingham, in an enterprising frame of mind, amused himself bringing cards from the chimney, from under the carpet, even fluttering down from the ceiling.

"May we ask," Madelon demanded, "to what charities you propose to devote that little cheque?"

Mr. Billingham smiled blandly.

"Charity," he replied, "begins at home!"

"Is poker really a game of skill?" Madelon asked, as she and Mr. Billingham paced the terrace after dinner a few nights later.

"I shall probably be able to answer that question to-morrow morning," her companion replied, a little grimly. "I have promised to make up a game to-night with some of the New York crowd. I don't much fancy it."

Madelon laughed softly.

"Why, my dear man," she exclaimed, "you can do what you like with them!"

Mr. Billingham shook his head a little sadly.

"In a way we are friends," he explained. "They are fellow-clubmen. I cannot treat them as I would Mrs. Groosens. So far as any manipulation of the cards is concerned, we meet on equal terms."

"Then don't gamble," she begged. "Mme. Groosens' two thousand isn't going to last us for ever."

"If I don't gamble," Mr. Billingham objected, "I must lose. Poker's kind of a queer game that way. The man who sits too tight at the stakes this crowd play is bound to get it in the neck."

"Whom are you playing with?" she inquired.

Mr. Billingham inclined his head towards the harbour.

"With Millionaire Frost and his crowd."

"On the yacht?"

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"I've got to get down there in a few minutes," he confided. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going to the opera after the first act, to Mme. de Bernande's box. You can leave me at the door as you pass—and good luck to you! Remember my chinchilla cape, and do not bluff!"

MR. BILLINGHAM looked for a moment or two almost wistfully after Madelon's slim form as she passed into the Casino. Then, with a little sigh, he went on his way down the steps, along the quay, across the drawbridge, to be received with much respect by a smart-looking steward and ushered into the saloon of the famous yacht the *Flying Dutchman*. Here four or five men were still sitting over their wine. The host of the party— a thick-set, prosperous-looking New Yorker—waved his hand cordially.

"Glad to see you, Billingham. Take a seat and try my Madeira before we get to business. Shake hands with Senator Curtis—Mr. Billingham. I guess you know the rest of the crowd."

Mr. Billingham accepted the seat, exchanged greetings all round, and drank a glass of wine. They were a typical little gathering of New Yorkers—opulent, full of good-nature and friendliness—and when they moved to the smoke-room and sat down at the poker table everyone was on the best of terms with himself and his neighbour. Only Mr. Billingham was for a moment thoughtful. He had paused to glance through the porthole across the little glittering stretch of water to the flaming lights of the Casino. He pulled himself together, however, with barely an effort, at the rattling of the chips.

"A hundred dollars ante, a thousand dollars rise—how's that?" the host proposed.

"It's steep," Mr. Billingham commented.

"I've seen you play the same game at the Manhattan," one of his acquaintances observed. "And, anyway, it's no use playing for nuts."

"I'm agreeable to whatever stakes you generally play, gentlemen," Mr. Billingham answered. "I guess it will take three of a kind to get me curious."

"You sit tight and you'll win a wad," Millionaire Frost declared. "We're all fool bluffers here. The Senator's the only man who understands the game, and he loses."

The chips were apportioned, the deal commenced, and the game proceeded. Mr. Billingham, playing with the utmost care, managed to just hold his own for the first part of the evening. At half-past eleven his host glanced at the clock.

"We're an early crowd here, Sam," he said. "Twelve o'clock sees us through. What do you say to starting a couple of rounds of jack-pots?"

"I'm agreeable," Mr. Billingham assented readily. "I was kind of set on seeing the folk out of the opera anyway."

A round of jack-pots proceeded with varying fortunes. Mr. Billingham saw his stock of chips, notwithstanding the utmost caution, materially reduced, and as each chip represented a hundred or a thousand dollars, according to its colour, the fact was not without its significance. The last jack-pot of the game Mr. Billingham himself opened. Everyone came in and everyone drew three cards, excepting the host, who drew two. Mr. Billingham took one and started the betting with the limit—a thousand dollars. He was seen by everyone until it came to the turn of his host, who raised him a thousand dollars. Mr. Billingham without hesitation raised the bid another thousand. The others dropped out.

They all gazed at the cards open-mouthed. The Senator leaned across and patted

Thenceforward it became a duel. The betting reached ten thousand dollars. Millionaire Frost relit his cigar, studied his cards, and looked across at his adversary.

"Say, ain't we wasting our breath like this?" he demanded. "It stands at ten thousand dollars just now. What about the doubling game?"

"I'm agreeable," Mr. Billingham replied without hesitation.

"Twenty thousand dollars, then," Millionaire Frost proposed.

"Forty thousand," Mr. Billingham rejoined.

There was a little chorus of exclamations and chaff.

"Guess you've run up against something, my lad," Senator Curtis observed, with a chuckle. 'It's a great game, that doubling game!"

Millionaire Frost studied his cards once more, scratched his head, and hesitated. Finally he threw them down on the table.

"I'm letting you have it, Billingham," he announced, counting his thousand-dollar chips out and throwing them into the middle. "I reckon you've got me. In any case I've quit being inquisitive."

"What did you get, anyway, Frost?" his friend Senator Curtis inquired.

"Only a pair of kings," was the regretful reply. "I kept a kicker and threw two, to put him off, but he wasn't having any. No good seeing him. He drew one card and opened. He must have opened with two pairs, which had me beat, to start with."

"Say, what had you?" the Senator inquired, turning to Mr. Billingham.

The latter hesitated for a single moment.

'I'd have you understand," he explained diffidently, "that this isn't the kind of game

Mr. Billingham on the back. "You've put one over on the old man," he declared.

I generally play. I picked up the eight, nine, ten, knave of spades and the knave of hearts. I opened the jack-pot, pushed the knave of hearts here to show you my openers," he went on, disclosing it, "and drew for a royal flush."

"And what did you get?" the other demanded.

Mr. Billingham turned his cards face upwards. He had still the eight, nine, ten, knave of spades, and the two of hearts.

"Bust!" he pointed out.

They all gazed at the cards open-mouthed. There was a roar of laughter. The Senator leaned across and patted Mr. Billingham on the back.

"You've put one over on the old man," he declared. "Say, Frost, what about it?"

Millionaire Frost laughed good-humouredly.

"A fine bit of play," he pronounced. "We'll have a bottle and a sandwich and drink your health, Mr. Billingham!"

Mr. Billingham was just in time to meet Madelon as she came out of the opera. She had said good-bye to Mme. de Bernande, and she welcomed him with a smile of pleasure.

"I knew uncle wouldn't be here, although he promised," she said.

"I hurried round," Mr. Billingham confided, "to see how you felt about a bite of supper."

"I should love it," she declared. "But tell me first, please—you didn't bluff?"

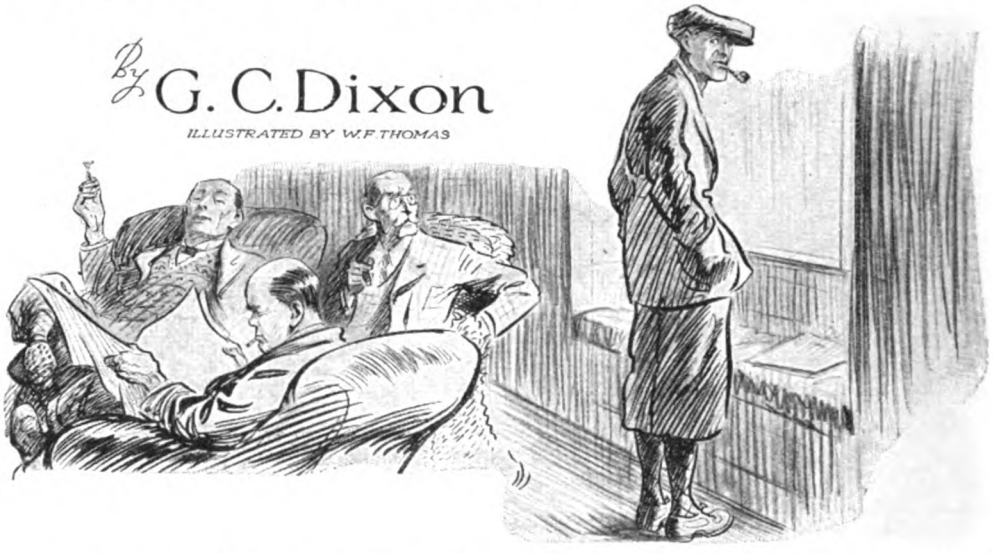
"Not exactly what you might call bluffing," Mr. Billingham replied evasively, as he tucked her hand through his arm and started across the Square.

(Another story in this series next month.)

The ROUND of HIS LIFE

By G. C. Dixon

ILLUSTRATED BY W. F. THOMAS



A SOUTHERLY squall rattled the windows, and through the glass, blurred by driving rain, a supercilious young man in plus fours stared discontentedly at the oaks swaying before the gale, the little pools already forming on the eighteenth green, and the wildly fluttering red flag.

"—— and I always maintain," he heard the Colonel saying, "that that was the most exciting match ever played and that Freddie Tait, for sheer nerve, was the world's greatest match player."

The young man at the window turned irritably.

"Rubbish," he said. A certain amount of insolence is permitted to men on plus three, and few of them fail to take advantage of it "Hagen would lick him hollow. What do you say, Hawkins? You're the only one who hasn't favoured us yet with a selection of mediæval myth and legend."

Hawkins dropped his paper and revealed a face which, but for the eyes, wore an expression of portentous gravity. His eyes, small and twinkling, had a habit of wrinkling around the corners so oddly that most people were never quite sure when he was smiling.

"I notice," he said irrelevantly, "that old Lady Marrovale is dead."

"Marrovale?" repeated the Colonel. "Not Herbert Marrovale's mother?"

"Aunt," said Hawkins. "With her death the family becomes extinct."

"Not much loss," reflected the Colonel "They were all wild, or mad. Look at Herbert Marrovale. There was a golfer for you—if only he hadn't been queer."

"Queer? How do you mean queer?" demanded the supercilious young man, aggressively.

"Haven't you heard how he tried to kill his caddie?" asked the Colonel, wearily. "Even you, I suppose, will admit that that was unusual. It was the last hole in the final, and the boy trod on his ball, thereby losing Marrovale the hole, the match, and the championship. Marrovale's face—I saw the whole thing—started twitching, his eyes blazed with sudden hate, white froth oozed between his teeth, and he sprang at the boy with his mashie. They grabbed him before he could do much harm, but you can imagine the sensation. The papers hushed it up, of course, and a few days later he disappeared. Blew his brains out probably. Anyway, he's never been seen since. And that was the end of the greatest match player since Tait and John Ball."

"It was *not* the end of Marrovale," said Hawkins smoothly, "nor was he the greatest match player since Ball. The best match player of my time was Ian Mulholland, and the most thrilling game in the whole history of golf was his tussle with Herbert Marrovale."

"Mulholland?" said the Colonel. "You mean the young fellow who was killed at

Loos, I suppose? I didn't know he ever met Marrovale. Marrovale disappeared in 1906, when Mulholland must have been at school. Surely you are mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken," replied Hawkins, easily. "I remember that match pretty distinctly. I had good reason to. Perhaps you'd like to hear the story? I promised Mulholland I'd never tell it. Didn't want to hurt Marrovale's people by opening up old wounds, you know. But now the old lady's dead I don't suppose it matters."

MULHOLLAND and I (said Hawkins) were at Eton together, and when he decided to have a rest from golf and go big-game shooting he asked me to go with him.

We sailed for Cape Town in 1913, picked up a coastal boat, and a month later were in Uganda and nearing the finest lion, elephant, and hippo country in the world. And then the trouble came.

It started one morning when Sambo the guide—his real name was unpronounceable—approached us at breakfast and, with many gestures and much rolling of eyes, began a long-winded discourse.

"All of which, O Sambo, means that you do not like the country we are now bound for," observed Mulholland, at the end of it.

"Very bad country," agreed Sambo, promptly. "No lions, no elephants, big swamps, much sickness."

"Nevertheless, that's where we're going," announced Mulholland. "Now, then, no argument. See that we are ready to start in half an hour."

"The master's wish is his servant's law," muttered Sambo, as he made off.

"Quite so," commented Mulholland. "But he doesn't seem too pleased about it. I wonder just what he's getting at."

Next morning I was awakened by a prod in the ribs, and, opening my eyes, found Mulholland standing beside me.

"Pleasant news," he announced. "Ten of our precious escort left last night."

"Left!" I repeated stupidly, rubbing my eyes.

"Cleared out, deserted, vanished. And Sambo tells me that it was only by bribery that he induced the rest to stick on."

"Better change route and go N'gambie, master," suggested Sambo. "Good shooting, good people, no trouble."

Secretly I was inclined to agree with him, but Mulholland wouldn't listen.

"I am keener than ever to know what's ahead of us," he declared. "Most probably it's nothing. These beggars are full of superstition."

Very sulkily the bearers picked up their loads and started off; and to make sure that no one slipped away unnoticed, Mulholland and I brought up the rear.

We had covered perhaps ten miles, and it was nearing sundown, when I saw one boy stoop, pick up something, and drop it with a cry. His neighbours gathered around and stared down as if fascinated, muttering, rolling their eyes, and exhibiting every sign of funk.

"What the devil's wrong with them now?" muttered Mulholland.

The guide, almost incoherent with fright, started to explain. I caught something about a white devil, whose domain this seemed to be; and I gathered that he destroyed people by strange weapons and a special brand of magic from which no white man was immune. White men, foolish people, had gone this way before, so Sambo declared. Where were they now? He indicated the westward with a fearful gesture and rubbed his stomach.

"He means, I fancy, that they were eaten," observed Mulholland, with a calm which I was far from sharing. 'I wonder what it was they found just now?"

He strolled across and picked something up.

"This is queer," he said. "Look here."

And he thrust a small piece of iron or steel into my hands. It was brown with rust, but the shape was unmistakable. It was a head of an old-fashioned, shallow-faced cleek.

I OPENED my eyes next morning to find the sun well up in the heavens and black figures looming above me.

"Well, what——" I stopped. These were not our boys. I had never looked before on these savage faces. Our boys did not stand above one with spears poised ready for a thrust. And as I rose to my feet with what show of courage I could muster, I realized that these fellows were half a foot taller than our boys, and three inches taller than myself.

Desperately I looked around me, but could see no escape. Mulholland, surrounded by half-a-dozen savages, was still sleeping. Our boys had disappeared—probably deserted us in the night.

"Mulholland!" I called. He stirred, opened his eyes, blinked, and took in the situation at a glance.

"H'm! Who're your friends, Hawkins?" he inquired calmly. "Can't say I take to them at first sight, but possibly they grow on one."

"You mean they fatten on one," I retorted, with a forlorn attempt at humour.

The leader of the band motioned to Mulholland to rise, pointed to the westward,

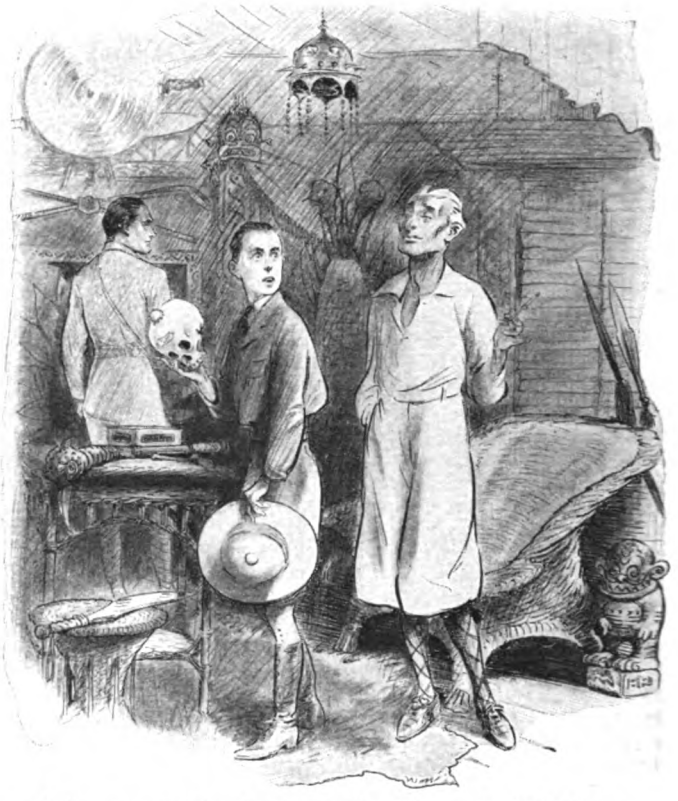
gave an order to his men, and strode off with a sign that we should follow. His followers picked up our guns and what our boys had left of our kit, and, with spear-heads uncomfortably near our shoulder-blades, we walked glumly after him.

For an hour we pushed through dense jungle. Then, to our relief, we came upon a track leading gently upwards towards some low hill or table-land, and quite suddenly emerged into the open.

"Thank God for that," said Mulholland. "It's good to see the sun again, and the green turf, and——"

He broke off. There was something wrong about that strip of turf. Its shape was too rectangular, its borders too sharply defined, its grass too uniformly short. I looked at Mulholland and Mulholland looked at me.

"If we were not in Central Africa," he said slowly, "I should have said that this—— Great Scott! Look there!"



"A pretty trophy, is it not?" said a voice behind us.

I turned, and away to the right saw a round patch of deeper green and a small white flag. It was a golf course!

Five minutes later they marched us up to a long, low bungalow, and the leader, lining his men up on the veranda, signed to us to enter.

We found ourselves in a big, airy room that looked, at first sight, something between a lounge and a museum: a fantastic blend of East and West, queer, even sinister. The cane arm-chairs were big and cosy, and the native weapons on the walls looked right enough; one expected them in such a setting. But what was that above the fireplace?

"Mulholland," I said, "look at this." And I pointed to two old drivers, uncannily familiar looking, crossed on the wall.

"I am more interested in this," he replied quietly; and he thrust something into my hand.

It was a skull. But it was not that which made me shiver. Upon the very centre of that bald and shining pate a golf ball had been mounted; and on the middle of the forehead there was a small silver plate. Turning it to the light, I read the inscription:—

H. H. MARRIOTT-MCGREGOR
(Royal and Ancient)
2 & 1

"My God, what do you make of that?" I whispered, still staring at that grisly prize.

"Nothing very pleasant," he said grimly. "But we'll probably know very soon."

"A pretty trophy, is it not?" said a voice behind us.

The skull, as I spun upon my heel, dropped from my nerveless fingers and bounced, with a horrid clatter, three or four feet across the floor. Before me stood a tall muscular man of perhaps forty, with the strangest face I had ever seen. His skin, burned by that fierce sun, was almost black, his hair was yellow, and his eyes, of palest blue, shone like bits of coloured glass. And his dress, when I could take it in, seemed odd too. The white flannel shirt, open at the neck, was ordinary enough; but his trousers were white plus fours.

"Forgive me if I startled you," said the stranger, as he picked up the skull and

placed it gently on the table. "You must also forgive me if the circumstances of your visit seem a little unusual. But one has few visitors in this part of the world, and it is possible that we press our hospitality a shade too persistently, especially"—here he bowed—"when our guests are men of breeding and distinction."

"For this reception," returned Mulholland, with a courteous inclination of the head, "we owe you much—more, I dare say, than we yet realize. But—excuse me if I seem a little abrupt—are there any conditions attached to our visit?"

Our host coughed.

"Perhaps," he said, gently, "I had better explain the peculiar difficulties of my position. I am, as you have gathered, the king of this tribe—an excellent people, but, between ourselves, a trifle primitive. My subjects and I—again I speak in confidence—have not a great deal in common, and so it becomes all the more necessary to make the most of any opportunities that crop up. Hence our mutual devotion to golf. Not, of course, that they are gifted exponents of the game. At first I did try to teach them the elements, but I encountered several difficulties. Their habit of staking not only their present wives, but those whom they have little prospect of acquiring, led to a reprehensible practice known on the Stock Exchange, I believe, as gambling in futures. They had a trick of pushing the ball through the rough with their toes until, sitting as a committee, I showed disapproval of this breach by removing the feet of the offenders and some others. And, worst of all, they would settle all disputes with their niblicks. Three valuable shafts were broken in this way; two or three times they neglected to remove a body; and once, in a particularly important match, my putt ran off on a divot from some idiot's skull. That was when I played—— But, let me see, I have a souvenir somewhere."

He reached across the table and picked up a miniature bone putter. On it I read:—

A. J. HARKNESS
(Royal St. George's)
1 down.

"That, I think, was the closest match I have had in these parts. I don't know why, but I regret to say that the majority of my opponents have been a little below form. There was J. F. Anderson, for instance. You may remember the fuss his disappearance caused. The papers had a theory that he died in Somaliland of malaria. He did not, gentlemen. He died of a topped mashie shot at the fifteenth hole. That pen handle is part of his tibia. And there was Hugh Bettington—a tutor at Oriel, I believe. They said he was attacked by a lion. What really attacked him was a spasm of socketting which culminated fatally. Eight and six, I believe the score was. That is the driver I lent him. And Lennox-Simpson—what a charming boy!—was supposed to have heart trouble. I dare say they were right, but the primary cause of his death was an habitual shortness with his putts. By the way, I can really recommend this whisky."

"This," I said, when I had gulped my nobbler neat, "this is intensely interesting. But supposing your visitor doesn't play golf?"

"In that case," replied the king, indifferently, "I hand him over to my men. After all, they have few pleasures."

"Oh, I play golf," I said, hastily, "though not particularly well. I gather"—my lips were dry again—"I gather that the men you defeat undergo the same process?"

"Quite so," agreed the king, pleasantly. "Another whisky?"

"Thanks." I had never needed one more. And never before had I been so glad that I played golf, even though I was only a ten-handicap man.

"Then, as I understand it," put in Mulholland, cheerfully, "the position is this. Everyone who comes here as a—er—visitor has the choice of playing a round with you and being eaten, or of being eaten without playing a round."

"He may, if he can, defeat me and live," corrected the king. "In that case I should probably be the dish for the oven. I rule here, you see, as a magician, and my subjects would not, I feel, look sympathetically on any failure of my art. Besides, they are a singularly hungry race. It is, however, very gratifying to think,' he added, thoughtfully, "that so far I have not been beaten."

"Very gratifying—eh, Hawkins?" agreed Mulholland, urbanely.

"What? Oh, very gratifying indeed!" I mumbled.

"Then shall we say to-morrow afternoon? That will give you the morning to have a run over the course. Is it agreed?"

"With pleasure, on one condition," Mulholland said. "My friend here is a little out of form just now. I would like him to caddie for me and share my fate, win or lose."

I felt those terrible pale eyes upon me.

"This is a little disappointing," murmured the king, regretfully. "I had reckoned on two games out of this. But it is, I suppose, more or less sanctioned by the rules. Besides, if he's a duffer I should derive no amusement from him anyway. Now, if I have your word that you will not attempt to escape, may I suggest that we dispense

I heard a joyous roar and saw the ball sail two hundred and

with these gentlemen outside, have a bath, and go in to dinner ? "

"SURPRISINGLY good course," observed Mulholland, as we strode towards the last green. "This driver is a shade too heavy and too whippy for my taste, but the rest of the clubs are first-rate. Heaven knows where he gets the balls from ! "

"Same source as the whisky and the cigars," I said, irritably. The mad contest that meant life or death to both of us was not two hours away, and the strain was beginning to tell on me.

"You know, I've an idea I've seen that beggar before. I wonder where ? "

"Well, one thing is certain," said I, for the twentieth time. "He's as mad as a hatter and as dangerous as a tiger."

"My dear chap, he's a perfect maniac," agreed Mulholland. "Have you noticed his eyes ? "

I had. I shivered and wondered wildly what chance we'd have if we took to that monstrous jungle. But I knew that, even if I broke my parole, Mulholland wouldn't.

The king was in high spirits at lunch, and Mulholland was just as cheerful. I said little and ate less.

We smoked on the veranda over the coffee, Mulholland retailing all the golf gossip of the season, and at half-past two the king tossed his cigar over the rail and looked at us inquiringly.

"Ready whenever you are," Mulholland told him. And a minute later, with Mulholland's clubs on my shoulder, and a black boy performing a similar office for the king, we set out for the first tee.

As we turned the trees and came in sight of the links my heart sank. All around the teeing ground and lining the fairway were hundreds of armed warriors, their skins glistening like coal tar in the blazing sun.

twenty yards down the middle.

"I think I know one reason why His Majesty always wins," Mulholland whispered, as I handed him his driver; and I fancied that even he was a little disturbed by the sea of savage faces on which our death warrant was already written.

The king won the toss for the honour, and with a sudden spasm of fear I saw the beautiful swing of the born golfer, heard a joyous roar, and saw the ball sail two hundred and twenty yards down the middle of that green strip and run perhaps thirty yards farther.

"Good ball, sir," said Mulholland. "I'll have it here, Tony."

I teed the ball with trembling fingers, stepped back until I could feel warm breath upon my neck, saw Mulholland swing his club, watched the ball swoop away down the sward, and then, as I was about to say 'Good ball!" heard the silence broken by a yell of exultation. The ball had curved away to the left and finished in dense low bushes.

"Hope I'm not in for an attack of hooking," smiled Mulholland.

The ball was lying atrociously, and he took two to hack it out and just failed to reach the green with his brassy. The king, amidst howls of delight, was well on with a second, and, getting his four, led the way to the second tee one up.

"I've got it," confided Mulholland, with the first trace of excitement he had shown. 'I thought I'd seen that face before. Now I've seen his swing, with that curious finish, I'm sure of it. It may comfort you to know, Tony, that the fellow I'm playing for our lives is Mr. Herbert C. Marrovale, twice amateur champion of Britain. Oh, very pretty, sir!"

The king had just placed a three-quarter iron shot not two yards from the second hole.

Mulholland was well on, ran up beside the hole with his second, and then stood back to watch the king try for his two. The ball rolled smoothly across the turf, hesitated on the brink, and then disappeared.

"H'm! Two down," said Mulholland, thoughtfully, when the pandemonium had died away. "This really mustn't go on."

But somehow it did. At the third he hooked his drive again and took five to the king's four. At the long fourth he outdrove the king for the first time, but was ten yards beyond the green with his second, and saw the king, thanks to a long putt, win the hole with another four. And at the fifth, a dog-legged hole, he rashly cut the corner too fine, hooked into the trees, and lost the ball and the hole.

Five down! I tried to convince myself that it was all a nightmare, but could not. The king's eyes shone curiously, the horde of savages rolled along the edges of the fairway, and, whenever they caught our eyes, ground their teeth and rubbed their oily stomachs. And Mulholland, though he was still smiling, had a steely look in his blue eyes and an iron set to his jaw.

"Getting a bit serious, Tony," he said, quietly, as we moved on to the sixth tee. "Awfully sorry I'm making such a mess of things for you."

I muttered a word of encouragement and despairingly watched them play the short sixth. Both were nicely on the green with their tee shots, and the king, putting first, stopped a foot away for a safe three.

Mulholland, going for a two, ran five feet past the hole; and a moment later another shattering roar proclaimed that he had missed the return putt and was six down.

"Tony, old boy, you must feel like kicking me," he growled. "I'm playing like a man in a blue funk. Honestly, though, I'm not. The truth is I've been playing too carefully. Well, it's neck or nothing now, so here goes!"

And he walked to the seventh tee with a smile I did my best to return.

Once more the king's tee shot finished a good two hundred and fifty yards down the fairway, and there was a triumphant gleam in his eyes as he watched Mulholland drive. There came a crisp, clear impact of club and ball, the staring savages craned forward, and there were gasps as Mulholland's ball went away like a bullet, rose in a graceful curve, dropped beside the other ball, and ran on another twenty yards.

"You drive a long ball," observed the king pleasantly.

"Really hit one at last," said Mulholland to me. "That extra bit may be useful here."

It was. With a beautiful brassy shot he reached the green and won the hole in four to five.

"Thank God!" I cried, above the groans of the savages. "The tide's turned."

BUT my flicker of hope soon died. The eighth was halved in threes, the ninth in fours, the tenth in fives, and the eleventh in fours, and we were five down with only seven to play.

At the twelfth, a three-hundred-and-twenty-yard hole, guarded by deep bunkers, the king made his first mistake. He pushed out his drive into the rough.

"A sporting chance yet, Tony," breathed Mulholland.

How would the king's ball be lying? With a pang which indicated how unreasonably my hopes had revived, I saw him take his stance on a small clear patch —"The devil's own luck, Tony!" muttered Mulholland—and watched the ball soar, drop sharply beside the flag, jump spasmodically, and stop five yards beyond.

Crisply and smoothly Mulholland swung his mashie, there came a dull thud, and the ball was lying not a yard from the pin. A minute later he had holed the putt for a win, and we were four down and six to play!

"We still live," said Mulholland, and once more I dared to hope. But the next was halved in fours, and we were four down and five to play. One more hole lost, or two halved, and it was all over.

At the long fourteenth the king was again outdriven, and just failed to reach the green. Mulholland, swinging his brassy with a loose-jointed ease that made his power all the more astonishing, hit a shot which thrills me yet. For a second I thought he had half-topped it. Then it rose like a bird, hovered, dropped just short of the green, bounced twice, rolled on, and disappeared in a little hollow near the flag.

The pushing, gibbering blacks swarmed ahead and in their excitement even crowded us a little, until a snarl from the king drove them backwards like scared jackals.

"I must apologize for my subjects," he said. "I've drilled a little etiquette into them, but they are still, as you see, a little primitive. One has to be tolerant, of course, but there are limits."

Just how he had taught them became clear a moment later. Anxious to see where Mulholland's ball lay, the blacks rushed forward, and one excited youth, not noticing that the king had taken his stance for that critical shot, kept up his shrill chatter. There was a bestial cry, a leap, a glint of steel in the sunshine, and a sharp crack. The boy tottered, fell, wriggled once or twice, and lay still.

For a moment the sunlight dimmed, and I felt faint and sick.

"Silly thing to do," the king was saying. "Might have broken the shaft."

Still breathing hard, he played the shot, and, like most angry men, played it badly, and was twenty yards short.

"The swine! The utter swine!" muttered Mulholland. "By God! We'll get him yet." And white of face but steady of hand, he sank a ten-foot putt for a glorious three. Three down and four to play.

The fifteenth was a short hole. A half swing, a thump on the turf, and Mulholland's ball pitched three yards short of the pin and a yard to the left, clawed at the ground like a live thing as the "cut" took effect, and finished beside the hole. A two to the king's three, and we were two down and three to play.

At the sixteenth both men drove beautiful balls down that lane of grotesque faces. The king, a few yards behind, took a spoon for the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard second shot, and with fear tugging at my heart I saw the ball soar high, fall twenty yards short, and roll well on to the green.

Mulholland, while the niggers roared with joy, was coolly measuring the distance with his eyes. For a second he hesitated; then he took a driving iron, straight-faced and rather heavy. I saw the king's eyes gleam, and I guessed what he was thinking—that Mulholland, unfamiliar with the course, had chosen too weak a club; and even I, who knew what Mulholland could do with a club like that, almost committed the folly of

offering advice. But before I could speak there came that smooth unhurried swing. The ball went away dead straight, rose perhaps twenty feet, dropped on the edge of the green, and rolled on and on until it lay beside the hole. A minute later the king had missed, as was only to be expected, his long putt for a three, and Mulholland, holing a nasty little two-footer without a second's hesitation, had won back yet another hole. One down and two to play!

The natives were almost silent now; but, hardily though I returned their glare, it was not easy to forget the menace in those staring eyes. One big fellow opened his mouth wide and pointed to his gaping throat; another felt the edge of a knife with his thumb and grinned horribly.

"A charming gallery," observed Mulholland. "Never again shall I care a damn for the crowds of a championship final. That is," he added, thoughtfully, "if I ever again have the privilege of playing in one."

His nonchalance was beyond me; my legs felt tired and weak, and I was uncomfortably conscious of the king's smiling contempt for the shaking fingers that fumbled for the sand.

"A really good one here *might* just reach the green," murmured Mulholland; and he swung his driver with the first sign of effort.

This pressing for distance was his undoing. For a moment it seemed that he had hit a beauty. Then the ball came round to the left, dropped on the edge of the fairway, and bounced amidst some stunted shrubs.

"Sorry, Tony,' said Mulholland; and God knows I must have been looking pretty sickly. One down and two to play, and it would soon be two down and one to play. The oven seemed very near just then.

'Just a chance; depends on how it's lying. By Jove! they've found it. That's a good sign."

But there was mockery in the grins that greeted us; and, following a pointed finger,

There was a leap, a glint of steel in the sunshine, and a sharp crack.

I saw the ball stuck in the fork of a shrub, a good three feet from the ground.

For the first time Mulholland swore. "Shouldn't be surprised if they put it there," he said. "Still, it's just playable. Give me the mashie."

Very cautiously, for fear of shaking the ball from its position, he took his stance. There was a thud, a flying bough momentarily distracted my eye, a plop could be heard quite clearly in that deadly stillness, and there was the ball lying beside the flag.

Almost hysterical with joy, I bawled incoherences in Mulholland's ear; but they were lost in the sullen roar of the crowd.

The king glanced at us and then at the faces around him, and somehow he had changed. He still had that fixed and horrible smile, but his eyes had lost their wolfishness.

' I believe that beggar's losing his nerve," whispered Mulholland. " There, what did I tell you ? "

Almost unable to believe my eyes, I saw that the king had completely duffed his approach. He walked forward slowly, essayed the task of holing a twenty-five-yard approach, watched the ball finish five yards short, and with a curious twitching of his face, and a new light in those pale eyes, strode on towards the next tee.

All square ! Laughing hysterically, I wrung Mulholland's hand, and found myself repeating it idiotically. All square ! All square ! All square !

" Quite a good finish," grinned Mulholland.

All square and one to play ! There was whispering amongst the savages, and low excited murmurs, and curious glances at Mulholland and the king.

THE last hole measured, according to the box, three hundred and seventy-five yards; and, being in the vicinity of the club-house or palace—call it which you like —it lay in a clearer country. Beyond some rough near the tee, and a clump of trees on the left of the fairway, there was little to trouble even the most erratic driver.

It may be that his miraculous recovery had made Mulholland over-confident, or he may at last have been shaken by the strain. With the roar of the savages in my ears, and a chill in my heart, I saw his drive come round like a boomerang and bound into the rough behind that solitary clump.

" Oh, bad luck ! " said the king, when the tumult had died away. His confidence, if he had ever lost it, had returned, and he swung his driver with all his old certainty. The ball finished far down the green fairway, and I knew that now the end was near.

Silently Mulholland and I approached the clump of trees, and a party of blacks, without the usual demonstration, pointed to the ball.

" Awfully sorry, Tony," murmured Mulholland, as he studied that dense barrier. " This time I'm afraid I've really done it in."

" Never mind, old boy," I mumbled, miserably.

" My God ! " cried Mulholland, " there's a sporting chance yet. One in a hundred. See there ! "

He dropped to his knees, and, following his example, I saw, about two feet from the ground, a small opening in the foliage. It was no bigger than a plate, but through it one could see a patch of green and a gently moving flag.

" The iron, Tony," cried Mulholland. " No, I must have a short shaft in this mess, and I must keep it low. Give me the putting cleek. You stand over there and watch if it comes through."

From the fairway I could see nothing but the trees and the figures of the savages, still as idols. There was a horrible pause, and then a faint thump, and the next second a flash of white as the ball skimmed over the turf, pitched a hundred yards ahead, and ran on towards the green. On and on it ran, until, meeting the curve of the green, it curled lazily to the left and stopped ten yards above the hole. Again there came a roar, but this time it held a new note.

" I believe they think you're a miracle-worker," I said, as I studied the respect, even awe, written on those ugly faces.

" Looks like it," admitted Mulholland, with a grin.

There was dead silence as the king swung his iron.

" God be praised ! Bunkered ! " cried Mulholland in my ear. And, so excited that I could have done a cake-dance, I gripped his arm and strode forward with the blood racing in my veins.

" Great Scott ! Look there ! "

I looked, and behind the bushes saw a party of niggers, and in their midst a huge cauldron from which a thin vapour rose. For a moment I stared, and then, faint and sick again, I looked away, only to catch a great buck nigger's eye. His lips parted in a hideous grin, his left hand fondled the dagger in his belt, and with his right he rubbed his huge and shining paunch.

" It seems that we have not yet converted all the heathen ; and I see now why most of His Majesty's opponents appear to have finished rather badly," said Mulholland, dryly. " Oh, well out, sir ! "

The king, recovering well, had pitched seven or eight yards from the pin.

" Yours, I fancy," he said, as he compared the distances.

Mulholland agreed, and I held my breath while he swung his putter. Again he was too venturesome, and again the ball finished a yard past the hole. Only too clearly I could visualize him missing the putt back.

The king judged it better. His ball trickled down the slope, seemed, for one ghastly second, about to drop in, ran round the lip, and stopped six inches beyond, directly between Mulholland and the hole. One for the match and our lives, and a dead stymie !

" Hell ! " said Mulholland, softly. " What's it to be, Tony—play safe for a half and go on to the nineteenth or go for a four and take the risk of knocking him in ? Safety or sudden death ? "

" S-sudden death," I stammered, feeling that that was what he expected of me.

I saw Mulholland seized by half-a-dozen warriors and thrust aloft, and heard a mighty shout of approbation and homage.

"Good man! I knew you would. The niblick, Tony."

I watched him practise the shot two or three times, and, looking up, shivered despite the clammy heat. The king's teeth were bared, his unnaturally pale eyes shone malignantly. Just so, I thought, a cat might look at a mouse within its claws.

Mulholland stooped for the critical shot—the most delicate, perhaps, in the whole range of golf—and there was a hush in the sweating, black throng about me. I saw the niblick nip forward, saw the ball rise and drop and disappear, heard, as in a dream, a wild yell which must have been my own, and sprang forward to wring Mulholland's hand.

The next instant I was flung aside by charging bodies. I saw Mulholland seized by half-a-dozen warriors and thrust aloft, and heard a mighty shout of approbation and homage. There came, too, a maniac scream behind me, and I wheeled in time to see the fallen king, snarling like a beast, go down before a swarm of savages. A knife rose and fell and rose again; and then—for, madman though he was, he was an Englishman—I turned away.

"Come on, Tony!" Mulholland was being borne in triumph towards the palace, while the rest of the mob reeled drunkenly across the green and dragged something limp towards the pot.

THERE was a pause in the club-house while Hawkins struck a match.

"There's little more to tell," he said. "They wanted us to stay, of course—Mulholland as King and me as Prime Minister. As courteously as may be, we declined these exalted offices, and next day, with a strong bodyguard, we were on the way to Mombasa. And that, gentlemen, is the end of what is, I think, a rather remarkable story."

The Escape of Mr. Trimm

By

IRVIN S. COBB

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

A number of famous American authors having been asked to select their best short story, Mr. Irvin S. Cobb, probably the highest-priced short story writer in America to-day, has chosen "The Escape of Mr. Trimm." Of this exceptionally vivid piece of story-telling, which is here published for the first time in any magazine in this country, he says:—

"I think this story is the best one I ever wrote. It was the first piece of out-and-out fiction I ever tried to write. That was about thirteen years ago, when I was in my middle thirties. All my life, ever since I was sixteen, I had been a newspaper worker. Daily journalism engaged my time and my efforts to the exclusion of all else. All of a sudden I felt a story stirring in the hub of my imagination. So when vacation came I sat down and wrote it. The main character was based upon the personality of a notorious American financier whose trial for violating our Federal banking laws I had a few months before reported for the evening paper that employed me. But the sequence of incidents which made up the narrative were of my own inventing.

"I offered the completed manuscript to the Editor of 'The Saturday Evening Post,' and he purchased it and invited me to submit more offerings. I did so, and he accepted other stories of mine, and thereby I was enabled to give up the grind of the newspaper shop for the less exacting field of magazine writing.

"I often find myself wishing that I might turn out another story which would come as near satisfying me as this story did."

MR. TRIMM, recently president of the late Thirteenth National Bank, was taking a trip which was different in a number of ways from any he had ever taken. To begin with, he was used to Pullman cars and even luxurious private cars when he went anywhere; whereas now he rode with a most mixed company in a dusty, smelly, ordinary coach. In the second place, his travelling companion was not such a one as Mr. Trimm would have chosen had the choice been left to him, being a stupid-looking German-American with a drooping yellow moustache. And in the third place, Mr. Trimm's plump white hands were folded in his lap, held in a close and enforced companionship by a new and shiny pair of Bean's Latest Model Little Giant handcuffs. Mr. Trimm was on his way to the Federal penitentiary to serve twelve years at hard labour for breaking, one way or another, about all the laws that are presumed to govern national banks.

ALL the time Mr. Trimm was in prison, fighting for a new trial, a certain question had lain in his mind unasked and unanswered. Through the seven months of his stay in the jail that question had been always at the back part of his head, ticking away there like a little watch that never needed winding. A dozen times a day it

would pop into his thoughts and then go away, only to come back again.

When Copley was taken to the penitentiary —Copley being the cashier, who got off with a lighter sentence because the judge and jury held him to be no more than a blind accomplice in the wrecking of the Thirteenth National—Mr. Trimm read closely every line that the papers said about Copley's departure. But none of them had seen fit to give the young cashier more than a short and colourless paragraph. For Copley was only a small figure in the big intrigue that had startled the country; Copley didn't have the money to hire big lawyers to carry his appeal to the higher courts for him; Copley's wife was keeping boarders; and as for Copley himself, he had been in prison several months now.

With Mr. Trimm it had been vastly different. From the very beginning he had held the public eye. His bearing in court when the jury came in with their judgment; his cold defiance when the judge, in pronouncing, sentence, mercilessly arraigned him and the system of finance for which he stood; the manner of his life in prison; his spectacular fight to beat the verdict, had all been worth columns of newspaper space. If Mr. Trimm had been a popular poisoner, or a society woman named as co-respondent in a sensational divorce suit, the papers could not have been more generous in their space allotments. And Mr. Trimm in his cell had read all of it with smiling contempt.

Things had been smoothed as much as possible for him in prison, for money and the power of it will go far toward ironing out even the corrugated routine of a big jail. He had a large cell to himself in the airiest, brightest corridor. His meals were served by a caterer from outside. Although he ate them without knife or fork, he soon learned that a spoon and the fingers can accomplish a good deal when backed by a good appetite, and Mr. Trimm's appetite was uniformly good. The warden and his underlings had been models of official kindliness; the newspapers had sent their brightest young men to interview him whenever he felt like talking, which wasn't often; and surely his lawyers had done all in his behalf that money—a great deal of money—could do. Perhaps it was because of these things that Mr. Trimm had never been able to bring himself to realize that he was the Hobart W. Trimm who had been sentenced to the Federal prison; it seemed to him, somehow, that he, personally, was merely a spectator standing at one side watching the fight of another man to dodge the penitentiary.

However, he didn't fail to give the other man the advantage of every chance that money would buy. This sense of aloofness to the whole thing had persisted even when his personal lawyer came to him one night and told him that the court of last possible resort had denied the last possible motion. Mr. Trimm cut the lawyer short with a shake of his head as the other began saying something about the chances of a pardon from the President. Mr. Trimm wasn't in the habit of letting men deceive him with idle words. No President would pardon him, and he knew it.

"Never mind that, Walling," he said, steadily, when the lawyer offered to come to see him again before he started for prison the next day. "If you'll see that a drawing-room on the train is reserved for me—for us, I mean—and all that sort of thing, I'll not detain you any further. I have a good many things to do to-night. Good night."

"Such a man, such a man," said Walling to himself as he climbed into his car; "all chilled steel and brains. And they are going to lock that brain up for twelve years. It's a crime," said Walling, and shook his head. Walling always said it was a crime when they sent a client of his to prison.

WHEN Jerry, the turnkey, came for him in the morning Mr. Trimm had made as careful a toilet as the limited means at his command permitted, and he had eaten a hearty breakfast and was ready to go, all but putting on his hat. Looking the picture of well-groomed, iron-grey middle age, Mr. Trimm followed the turnkey through the long corridor and down the winding iron stairs to the warden's office.

The warden, Hallam, was there with another man, a tall, raw-boned man with a drooping, straw-coloured moustache and the unmistakable look about him of the police officer. Mr. Trimm knew without being told that this was the man who would take him to prison. The stranger was standing at a desk, signing some papers.

"Sit down, please, Mr. Trimm," said the warden with a nervous cordiality. "Be through here in just one minute. This is Deputy Marshal Meyers," he added.

Mr. Trimm started to tell this Mr. Meyers he was glad to meet him, but caught himself and merely nodded. The man stared at him with neither interest nor curiosity in his dull blue eyes. The warden moved over toward the door.

"Mr. Trimm," he said, clearing his throat, "I took the liberty of calling a cab to take you gents up to the Grand Central Station. It's out in front now. But there's a big crowd of reporters and photographers and a lot of other people waiting, and if I was you I'd slip out the back way—one of my men

will open the yard gate for you—and jump aboard the subway down at Worth Street. Then you'll miss those fellows."

"Thank you, warden—very kind of you," said Mr. Trimm, in that crisp, businesslike way of his. He had been crisp and businesslike all his life. He heard a door opening softly behind him, and when he turned to look he saw the warden slipping out, furtively, in almost an embarrassed fashion.

"WELL," said Meyers, "all ready?"

"Yes," said Mr. Trimm, and he made as if to rise.

"Wait one minute," said Meyers.

He half turned his back on Mr. Trimm and fumbled at the side pocket of his ill-hanging coat. Something inside of Mr. Trimm gave the least little jump, and the question that had ticked away so busily all those months began to buzz, buzz in his ears; but it was only a handkerchief the man was getting out. Doubtless he was going to mop his face.

He didn't mop his face, though. He unrolled the handkerchief slowly, as if it contained something immensely fragile and valuable, and then, thrusting it back in his pocket, he faced Mr. Trimm. He was carrying in his hands a pair of handcuffs that hung open-jawed. The jaws had little notches in them, like teeth that could bite. The question that had ticked in Mr. Trimm's head was answered at last—in the sight of these steel things with their notched jaws.

Mr. Trimm stood up and, with a movement as near to hesitation as he had ever been guilty of in his life, held out his hands, backs upward.

"I guess you're new at this kind of thing," said Meyers, grinning. "This here way—one at a time."

He took hold of Mr. Trimm's right hand, turned it sideways, and settled one of the steel cuffs over the top of the wrist, flipping the notched jaw up from beneath and pressing it in so that it locked automatically with a brisk little click. Slipping the locked cuff back and forth on Mr. Trimm's lower arm like a man adjusting a part of machinery, and then bringing the left hand up to meet the right, he treated it the same way. Then he stepped back.

Mr. Trimm hadn't meant to protest. The word came unbidden.

"This—this isn't necessary, is it?" he asked, in a voice that was husky and didn't seem to belong to him.

"Yep," said Meyers. "Standin' orders is play no favourites and take no chances. But you won't find them things uncomfortable. Lightest pair there was in the office, and I fixed 'em plenty loose."

For half a minute Mr. Trimm stood like a rooster hypnotized by a chalk mark, his arms extended, his eyes set on his bonds. His hands had fallen perhaps four inches apart, and in the space between his wrists a little chain was stretched taut. In the mounting tumult that filled his brain there sprang before Mr. Trimm's consciousness a phrase he had heard or read somewhere, the title of a story, or perhaps it was a headline—The Grips of the Law. The Grips of the Law were upon Mr. Trimm—he felt them now for the first time in these shiny wristlets and this bit of chain that bound his wrists and filled his whole body with a strange, sinking feeling that made him physically sick. A sudden sweat beaded out on Mr. Trimm's face, turning it slick and wet.

He had a handkerchief, a fine linen handkerchief with a hemstitched border and a monogram on it, in the upper breast pocket of his buttoned coat. He tried to reach it. His hands went up, twisting awkwardly like crab claws. The fingers of both plucked out the handkerchief. Holding it so, Mr. Trimm mopped the sweat away. The links of the handcuffs fell in upon one another and lengthened out again at each movement, filling the room with a smart little sound.

He got the handkerchief stowed away with the same clumsiness. He raised the manacled hands to his hat brim, gave it a downward pull that brought it over his face, and then, letting his short arms slide down upon his plump stomach, he faced the man who had put the fetters upon him, squaring his shoulders back. But it was hard, somehow, for him to square his shoulders—perhaps because of his hands being drawn so closely together. And his eyes would waver and fall upon his wrists. Mr. Trimm had a feeling that the skin must be stretched very tight on his jawbones and his forehead.

"Isn't there some way to hide these—these things?"

He began by blurting and ended by faltering it. His hands shuffled together, one over, then under the other.

"Here's a way," said Meyers. "This'll help."

He bestirred himself, folding one of the chained hands upon the other, tugging at the white linen cuffs and drawing the coat sleeves of his prisoner down over the bonds as far as the chain would let them come.

"There's the notion," he said. "Just do that-a-way and them bracelets won't hardly show a-tall. Ready? Let's be movin', then."

But handcuffs were never meant to be hidden. Merely a pair of steel rings clamped

to one's wrists and coupled together with a scrap of chain, but they'll twist your arms and hamper the movements of your body in a way constantly to catch the eye of the passer-by. When a man is coming toward you, you can tell that he is handcuffed before you see the cuffs.

Mr. Trimm was never able to recall afterwards exactly how he left the prison. He had a confused memory of a gate that was swung open by someone whom Mr. Trimm saw only from the feet to the waist; then he and his companion were out on Lafayette Street, speeding south toward the subway entrance at Worth Street, two blocks below, with the marshal's hand cupped under Mr. Trimm's right elbow and Mr. Trimm's plump legs almost trotting in their haste. For a moment it looked as if the warden's well-meant artifice would serve.

"You won't find them things uncomfortable. Lightest pair there was in the office, and I fixed 'em plenty loose."

But New York reporters are up to the tricks of people who want to evade them. At the sight of them a sentry reporter on the corner shouted a warning which was instantly caught up and passed on by another picket stationed half-way down the block; and around the wall of the prison came pelting a flying mob of newspaper photographers and reporters, with a choice rabble behind them.

Fairly running now, the manacled banker and the deputy marshal shot down the winding steps into the subway a good ten yards ahead of the foremost pursuers. But there was one delay, while Meyers skirmished with his free hand in his trousers pocket for a coin for the tickets, and another before a north-bound local rolled into the station. Shouted at, jeered at, shoved this way and that, panting in gulping breaths, for he was stout by nature and staled by lack of exercise, Mr. Trimm, with Meyers clutching him by the arm, was fairly shot aboard one of the cars, at the apex of a human wedge. The astonished guard sensed the situation as the scrooging, shoving, noisy wave rolled across the platform toward the doors which he had opened, and, thrusting the officer and his prisoner into the narrow platform space behind him, he tried to form with his body a barrier against those who came jamming in.

It didn't do any good. He was brushed away, protesting and blustering. The excitement spread through the train, and men, and even women, left their seats, overflowing the aisles.

There is no crueller thing than a city crowd, all eyes and morbid curiosity. But Mr. Trimm didn't see the staring eyes on that ride to the Grand Central. What he saw was many shifting feet and a hedge of legs shutting him in closely—those and the things on his wrists. What the eyes of the crowd saw was a small, stout man who, for all his bulk, seemed to have dried up inside his clothes so that they bagged on him in some places and bulged in others, with his head tucked on his chest, his hat over his face, and his fingers straining to hold his coat-sleeves down over a pair of steel bracelets.

"My lawyer promised to arrange for a compartment—for some private place on the train," he said to Meyers. "The conductor ought to know."

They were the first words he had uttered since he left the prison. Meyers spoke to a jaunty Pullman conductor who stood alongside the car where they had halted.

"No such reservation," said the conductor, running through his sheaf of slips, with his eyes shifting from Mr. Trimm's face to Mr. Trimm's hands and back again, as though he couldn't decide which was the more interesting part of him; "must be some mistake. Or else it was for some other train. Too late to change now—we pull out in three minutes."

"I reckon we better git on the smoker," said Meyers, "if there's room there."

Mr. Trimm was steered back again the length of the train through a double row of pop-eyed porters and staring trainmen. At the steps where they stopped the instinct to stretch out one hand and swing himself up by the rail operated automatically and his wrists got a nasty twist. Meyers and a brakeman practically lifted him up the steps, and Meyers headed him into a car that was hazy with blue tobacco smoke. He was confused in his gait, almost as if his lower limbs had been fettered too.

"This here'll do as well as any, I guess," said Meyers. He drew Mr. Trimm past him into the seat nearer the window and sat down alongside him, breathing deeply, like a man who had got through the hardest part of a not easy job.

"Smoke?" he asked.

Mr. Trimm shook his head without raising it.

"Them cuffs feel plenty easy?" was the deputy's next question. He lifted Mr. Trimm's hands as casually as if they had been his hands and not Mr. Trimm's, and looked at them.

"Seem to be all right," he said as he let them fall back. "Don't pinch none, I reckon?" There was no answer.

The deputy tugged a minute at his moustache, searching his arid mind. An idea came to him. He drew a newspaper from his pocket, opened it out flat, and spread it over Mr. Trimm's lap so that it covered the chained wrists. Almost instantly the train was in motion, moving through the yards.

"BE there in two hours more," volunteered Meyers. It was late afternoon. They were sliding through woodlands with occasional openings which showed meadows melting into wide, flat lands.

"Want a drink?" said the deputy, next. "No? Well, I guess I'll have a drop myself. Travellin' fills a feller's throat full of dust." He got up, lurching to the motion of the flying train, and started forward to the water-cooler behind the car door. He had gone perhaps two-thirds of the way when Mr. Trimm felt a queer, grinding sensation beneath his feet; it was exactly as though the train were trying to go forward and back at the same time. Almost slowly, it seemed to him, the forward end of the car slued out of its straight course, at the same time tilting up. There was a grinding, roaring, grating sound, and before Mr. Trimm's eyes Meyers vanished, tumbling forward out of sight as the car floor buckled under his feet. Then, as everything—the train, the earth, the sky—all fused together in a great spatter of white and black, Mr. Trimm was plucked from his seat as though a giant hand had him by the collar and shot forward through the air over the seat-backs, his chained hands aloft, clutching wildly. He rolled out of a ragged opening where the smoker had broken in two, flopped gently on the sloping side of the right-of-way, and slid easily to the bottom, where he lay quiet and still on his back in a bed of weeds and wild grass, staring straight up.

How many minutes he lay there Mr. Trimm didn't know. It may have been the shrieks of the victims or the glare from the fire that brought him out of the daze. He wriggled his body to a sitting posture, got on his feet, holding his head between his coupled hands, and gazed full-face into the crowning railroad horror of the year.

There were numbers of the passengers who had escaped serious hurt, but for the most part these persons seemed to have gone daft from terror and shock. Some were running aimlessly up and down and some, a few, were pecking feebly with improvised tools at the wreck, an indescribable jumble of ruin, from which there issued cries of mortal agony, and from which, at a point where two locomotives were lying on their sides, jammed together like fighting bucks that had died with locked horns, a tall flame already rippled and spread, sending up a pillar of black smoke that rose straight, poisoning the clear blue of the sky. Nobody paid any attention to Mr. Trimm as he stood swaying upon his feet. There wasn't a scratch on him. His clothes were hardly rumpled, his hat was still on his head. He stood a minute and then, moved by a sudden impulse, he turned round and went running straight away from the railroad at the best speed his pudgy legs could accomplish, with his arms pumping up and down in front of him and his fingers interlaced. It was a grotesque gait, rather like a rabbit hopping on its hind legs.

Instantly, almost, the friendly woods growing down to the side of the track swallowed him up. He dodged and doubled back and forth among the tree trunks, his small, patent-leathered feet skipping nimbly over the irregular turf, until he stopped for lack of wind in his lungs to carry him another rod. When he had got his breath back Mr. Trimm leaned against a tree and bent his head this way and that, listening. No sound came to his ears except the sleepy calls of birds. As well as Mr. Trimm might judge he had come far into the depths of a considerable woodland. Already the shadows under the low limbs were growing thick and confused as the hurried twilight of early September came on.

Mr. Trimm sat down on a natural cushion of thick green moss between two roots of an oak. The place was clean and soft and sweet-scented. For some little time he sat there motionless, in a sort of mental haze. Then his round body slowly slid down flat upon the moss, his head lolled to one side, and, the reaction having come, Mr. Trimm's limbs all relaxed and he went to sleep straightway.

After a while, when the woods were black and still, the half-grown moon came up and, sifting through a chink in the canopy of leaves above, shone down full on Mr. Trimm as he lay snoring gently with his mouth open and his hands rising and falling on his breast. The moonlight struck upon the Little Giant handcuffs, making them look like quicksilver.

Toward daylight it turned off sharp and cool. Mr. Trimm opened his eyes slowly, hardly sensing for the first moment or two how he came to be lying under a canopy of leaves, and gaped, seeking to stretch his arms. At that he remembered everything; he hunched his shoulders against the tree roots and wriggled himself up to a sitting position, where he stayed for a while, letting his mind run over the sequence of events that had brought him where he was and taking inventory of the situation.

Of escape he had no thought. The hue and cry must be out for him before now; doubtless men were already searching for him. It would be better for him to walk in and surrender than to be taken in the woods like some animal escaped from a travelling menagerie. But the mere thought of enduring again what he had already gone through—the thought of being tagged by crowds and stared at, with his fetters on—filled him with a nausea. Nothing that the Federal penitentiary might hold in store for him could equal the black, blind shamefulness of yesterday; he knew that. The thought of the new ignominy that faced him made Mr. Trimm desperate. He had a desire to burrow into the thicket yonder and hide his face and his chained hands.

But perhaps he could get the handcuffs off and so go to meet his captors in some manner of dignity. Strange that the idea hadn't occurred to him before! It seemed to Mr. Trimm that he desired to get his two hands apart more than he had ever desired anything in his whole life before.

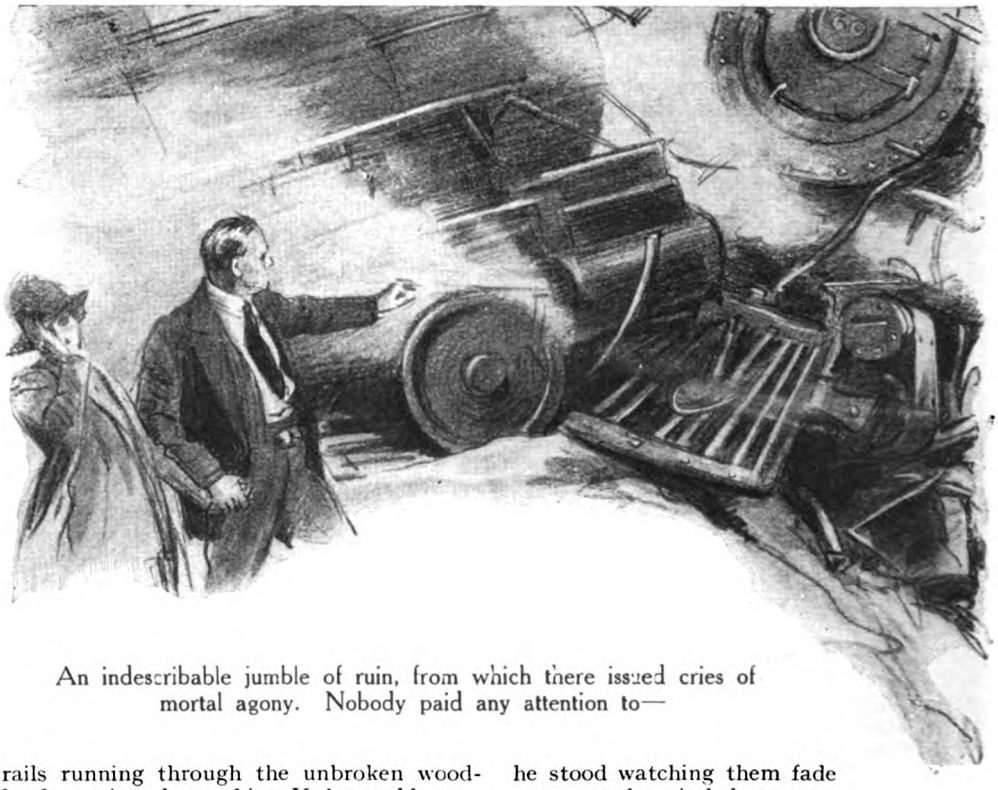
The hands had begun naturally to adjust themselves to their enforced companionship, and it wasn't such a very hard matter, though it cost him some painful wrenches and much twisting of the fingers, for Mr. Trimm to get his eyeglasses in their small leather case out of his upper waistcoat pocket. With the glasses on his nose he subjected his bonds to a critical examination. Each rounded steel band ran unbroken except for the smooth, almost jointless hinge and the small lock which sat perched on the back of the wrist in a little rounded excrescence like a steel wart. In the flat centre of each lock was a small keyhole, and alongside of it a notched nub, the nub being sunk in a minute depression.

On the inner side, underneath, the cuffs slid into themselves—two notches on each showing where the jaws might be tightened to fit a smaller hand than his—and right over the large blue veins in the middle of the wrists were swivel links, shackle-bolted to the cuffs, and connected by a flat, slightly larger middle link, giving the hands a palm-to-palm play of not more than four or five inches. The cuffs did not hurt—even after so many hours there was no actual discomfort from them and the flesh beneath them was hardly reddened.

But it didn't take Mr. Trimm long to find out that they were not to be got off. He tugged and pulled, trying with his fingers for a purchase. All he did was to chafe his skin and make his wrists throb with pain. The cuffs would go forward just so far, then the little humps of bone above the hands would catch and hold them.

Mr. Trimm was not a man to waste time in the pursuit of the obviously hopeless. Presently he stood up, shook himself, and started off at a fair gait through the woods.

Then he heard the long-drawn, quavering, banshee wail of a locomotive. The sound came from almost behind him, in an opposite direction from where he supposed the track to be. So he turned around and went back the other way. He crossed a half-dried-up stream and climbed a small hill, neither of which he remembered having met in his flight from the wreck, and in a little while he came out upon the railroad. To the north a little distance the rails bent round a curve. To the south, where the diminishing



An indescribable jumble of ruin, from which there issued cries of mortal agony. Nobody paid any attention to—

rails running through the unbroken woodland met in a long, shiny V, he could see a big smoke smudge against the horizon. This smoke Mr. Trimm knew must come from the wreck—which was still burning, evidently. As nearly as he could judge he had come out of cover at least two miles above it. After a moment's consideration he decided to go south toward the wreck. Soon he could distinguish small dots like ants moving in and out about the black spots, and he knew these dots must be men.

A whining, whirring sound came along the rails to him from behind. He faced about just as a handcar shot out around the curve from the north, moving with amazing rapidity under the strokes of four men at the pumps. Other men, labourers to judge by their blue overalls, were sitting on the edges of the car with their feet dangling. For the second time within twelve hours impulse ruled Mr. Trimm, who wasn't given to impulses normally. He made a jump off the right-of-way, and as the handcar flashed by he watched its flight from the covert of a weed tangle.

BUT even as the handcar was passing him Mr. Trimm regretted his hastiness. He must surrender himself sooner or later; why not to these overalled labourers, since it was a thing that had to be done? As he stood watching them fade away and minded to try hailing them, yet still hesitating against his judgment, Mr. Trimm saw something white drop from the hands of one of the blue-clad figures on the handcar, unfold into a newspaper, and come fluttering back along the tracks toward him. Just as he, starting doggedly ahead, met it, the little ground breeze that had carried it along died out and the paper dropped and flattened right in front of him. The front page was uppermost, and he knew it must be of that morning's issue, for across the column tops ran the flaring headline, "Twenty Dead in Frightful Collision."

Squatting on the cindered track, Mr. Trimm patted the crumpled sheet flat with his hands. His eyes dropped from the first of the glaring captions to the second, to the next—and then his heart gave a great bound inside of him and, clutching up the newspaper to his breast, he bounded off the tracks back into another thicket and huddled there with the paper spread on the earth in front of him, reading by gulps while the chain that linked wrist to wrist tinkled to the tremors running through him. What he had seen first, in staring black-face type, was his own name leading the list of known dead, and what he saw now was a narrative in which his name recurred again

and again. The body of the United States deputy marshal, Meyers, frightfully crushed, had been taken from the wreckage of the smoker, and near to Meyers another body, with features burned beyond recognition, yet still retaining certain distinguishing marks of measurement and contour, had been found and identified as that of Hobart W. Trimm, the convicted banker. The bodies of these two, with eighteen other mangled dead, had been removed to a town called Westfield, from which town of Westfield the account of the disaster had been telegraphed to the New York paper. In another column farther along was more about Banker Trimm; facts about his soiled, selfish, greedy, successful life, his great fortune, his trial, and a statement that, in the absence of any close kin to claim his body, his lawyers had been notified.

Mr. Trimm read the account through to the end, and as he read the sense of dominant, masterful self-control came back to him in waves. He got up, taking the paper with him, and went back into the deeper woods, moving warily and watchfully. As he went his mind, trained to take hold of problems and wring the essence out of them, was busy. Of the charred, grisly thing in the improvised morgue at Westfield, wherever that might be, Mr. Trimm took no heed nor wasted any pity. All his life he had used live men to work his will, with no thought of what might come to them afterward. The living had served him, why not the dead?

He had other things to think of than this dead proxy of his. He was as good as free! There would be no hunt for him now; no alarm out, no search-parties combing every scrap of cover for a famous criminal turned fugitive. He had only to lie quiet a few days, somewhere, then get in secret touch with Walling. Walling would do anything for money. And he had the money—four millions and more, cannily saved from the crash that had ruined so many others.

He would alter his personal appearance, change his name—he thought of Duvall, which was his mother's name—and with Walling's aid he would get out of the country and into some other country where a man might live like a prince on four millions or the fractional part of it. He thought of South America, of South Africa, of a private yacht swinging through the little-frequented islands of the South Seas. All that the law had tried to take from him would be given back. Walling would work out the details of the escape—and make it safe and sure—trust Walling for those things. On one side was the prison, with its promise of twelve grinding years sliced out of the very heart of his life; on the other, freedom, ease, security, even power. Through Mr. Trimm's mind tumbled thoughts of concessions, enterprises, privileges—the back corners of the globe were full of possibilities for the right man. And between this prospect and

—Mr. Trimm, who went running away at the best speed his pudgy legs could accomplish.

Mr. Trimm there stood nothing in the way, nothing but——

Mr. Trimm's eyes fell upon his bound hands. Snug-fitting, shiny steel bands irked his wrists. The Grips of the Law were still upon him.

But only in a way of speaking. It was preposterous, unbelievable, altogether out of the question that a man with four millions salted down and stored away, a man who all his life had been used to grappling with the big things and wrestling them down into submission, a man whose luck had come to be a byword—and had not it held good even in this last emergency?—would be balked by puny scraps of forged steel and a trumpery lock or two. Why, these cuffs were no thicker than the gold bands that Mr. Trimm had seen on the arms of overdressed women at the opera. The chain that joined them was no larger, and probably no stronger, than the chains which Mr. Trimm's chauffeur wrapped around the tyres of the touring-car in winter to keep the wheels from skidding on the slush. There would be a way, surely, for Mr. Trimm to free himself from these things. There must be—that was all there was to it.

Mr. Trimm looked himself over. His clothes were not badly rumpled; his patent-leather shoes were scarcely scratched. Without the handcuffs he could pass unnoticed anywhere. By night, then, he must be free of them and on his way to some small inland city, to stay quiet there until the guarded telegram that he would send in cipher had reached Walling. There in the woods by himself Mr. Trimm no longer felt the ignominy of his bonds; he felt only the temporary embarrassment of them and the need of added precaution until he should have mastered them.

He was once more the unemotional man of affairs who had stood Wall Street on its esteemed head and caught the golden streams that trickled from its pockets. First making sure that he was in a well-screened covert of the woods, he set about exploring all his pockets. The coat pockets were comparatively easy, now that he had got used to using two hands where one had always served, but it cost him a lot of twisting of his body and some pain to his mistreated wrist-bones to bring forth the contents of his trousers pockets. The chain kinked time and again as he groped with the undermost hand for the openings; his dumpy, pudgy form writhed grotesquely. But finally he finished. The search produced four cigars somewhat crumpled and frayed; some matches in a gun-metal case, a silver cigar-cutter, two five-dollar bills, a handful of small change, the leather case of the eye-glasses, a couple of quill toothpicks, a gold watch with a dangling fob, a notebook, and some papers. Mr. Trimm ranged these things in a neat row upon a log, like a watchmaker putting out his kit, and took swift inventory of them. Some he eliminated from his design, stowing them back in the pockets easiest to reach. He kept for present employment the match case, the cigar-cutter, and the watch.

THIS place where he had halted would suit his present purpose well, he decided. It was where an uprooted tree, fallen across an incurving bank, made a snug little recess that was closed in on three sides. Spreading the newspaper on the turf to save his knees from soiling, he knelt and set to his task. For the time he felt neither hunger nor thirst. He had found out during his earlier experiments that the nails of his little fingers, which were trimmed to a point, could invade the keyholes in the little steel warts on the backs of his wrists and touch the locks. The mechanism had even twitched a little bit under the tickle of the nail ends. So, having already smashed the gun-metal match case under his heel, Mr. Trimm selected a slender-pointed bit from among its fragments and got to work, the left hand drawn up under the right, the fingers of the right busy with the lock of the left, the chain tightening and slackening with subdued clinking sounds at each movement.

Mr. Trimm didn't know much about picking a lock. He had got his money by a higher form of burglary that did not require a knowledge of lock-picking. Nor as a boy had he been one to play at mechanics. He had let other boys make the toys and then he had traded for them. He was sorry now that he hadn't given more heed to the mechanical side of things when he was growing up.

He worked with a deliberate slowness, steadily. Nevertheless, it was hot work. Late in the afternoon Mr. Trimm lay back against the bank, panting. His face was splotched with red, and the little hollows at the sides of his forehead pulsed rapidly up and down like the bellies of scared tree frogs. The bent outer case of the watch littered a bare patch on the log; its mainspring had gone the way of the fragments of the gun-metal match case which were lying all about, each a worn-down, twisted wisp of metal. The spring of the eyeglasses had been confiscated long ago and the broken crystals powdered the earth where Mr. Trimm's toes had scraped a smooth patch. The nails of the two little fingers were worn to the quick and splintered down into the raw flesh. There were countless tiny scratches and marks on the locks of the handcuffs, and the steel wristbands were dulled with blood

smears and pale-red tarnishes of new rust; but otherwise they were as staunch and strong a pair of Bean's Latest Model Little Giant handcuffs as you'd find anywhere.

The devilish, stupid malignity of the damned things! With an acid oath Mr. Trimm raised his hands and brought them down on the log violently. There was a double click and the bonds tightened painfully, pressing the chafed red skin white. Mr. Trimm snatched up his hands close to his near-sighted eyes and looked. One of the little notches on the under side of each cuff had disappeared. It was as if they were living things that had turned and bitten him for the blow he gave them.

From the time the sun went down there was a tingle of frost in the air. Mr. Trimm didn't sleep much. Under the squeeze of the tightened fetters his wrists throbbed steadily and racking cramps ran through his arms. His stomach felt as though it were tied into knots. The water that he drank only made his hunger sickness worse. His undergarments, that had been wet with perspiration, clung to him clammily. His middle-aged, tenderly-cared-for body called through every pore for clean linen and soap and water and rest, as his empty inside called for food.

After a while he became so chilled that the demand for warmth conquered his instinct for caution. He felt about him in the darkness, gathering scraps of dead wood, and, after breaking several of the matches that had been in the gun-metal match case, he managed to strike one and with its tiny flame started a fire. He huddled almost over the fire, coughing when the smoke blew into his face and twisting and pulling at his arms in an effort to get relief from the everlasting cramps. It seemed to him that if he could only get an inch or two more of play for his hands he would be ever so much more comfortable. But he couldn't, of course.

He dozed finally, sitting cross-legged with his head sunk between his hunched shoulders. A pain in a new place woke him. The fire had burned almost through the thin sole of his right shoe, and as he scrambled to his feet and stamped, the clap of the hot leather flat against his blistered foot almost made him cry out.

Soon after sunrise a boy came riding a horse down a faintly traced footpath along the creek, driving a cow with a bell on her neck ahead of him. Mr. Trimm's ears caught the sound of the clanking bell before either the cow or her herder was in sight, and he limped away, running, skulking through the thick cover. A pendent loop of a wild grape-vine, swinging low, caught his hat and flipped it off his head; but Mr. Trimm, imagining pursuit, did not stop to pick it up and went on bareheaded until he had to stop from exhaustion. He saw some dark-red berries on a shrub upon which he had trod, and, stooping, he plucked some of them with his two hands and put three or four in his mouth experimentally. Warned instantly by the harsh, burning taste, he spat the crushed berries out and went on doggedly, following, according to his best judgment, a course parallel to the railroad. It was characteristic of him, a city-bred man, that he took no heed of distances nor of the distinguishing marks of the timber.

Behind a log at the edge of a small clearing in the woods he halted some little time, watching and listening. The clearing seemed deserted; certainly it was still. Near the centre of it rose the sagging roof of what had been a shack or a shed of some sort. Stooping cautiously, Mr. Trimm made for the ruined shanty and gained it safely. In the midst of the rotted, punky logs that had once formed the walls he began scraping with his feet. Presently he uncovered something. It was a broken-off harrow tooth scaled like a long, red fish with the crusted rust of years.

Mr. Trimm rested the lower rims of his handcuffs on the edge of an old, broken watering trough, worked the pointed end of the rust-crusted harrow tooth into the flat middle link of the chain as far as it would go, and then with one hand on top of the other he pressed downward with all his might. The pain in his wrists made him stop this at once. The link had not sprung or given in the least, but the twisting pressure had almost broken his wrist-bones. He let the harrow tooth fall, knowing that it would never serve as a lever to free him—which, indeed, he had known all along—and sat on the side of the trough, rubbing his wrists and thinking.

HE had another idea. It came into his mind as a vague suggestion that fire had certain effects upon certain metals. He kindled a fire of bits of the rotted wood, and when the flames ran together and rose slender and straight in a single red thread he thrust the chain into it, holding his hands as far apart as possible in the attitude of a player about to catch a bounced ball. But immediately the pain of that grew unendurable too, and he leaped back, jerking his hands away. He had succeeded only in blackening the steel and putting a big water blister on one of his wrists right where the shackle bolt would press upon it.

Where he huddled down in the shelter of one of the fallen walls he noticed, presently, a strand of rusted fence wire still held to

half-tottering posts by a pair of blackened staples; it was part of a pen that had been used once for chickens or swine. Mr. Trimm tried the wire with his fingers. It was firm and springy. Rocking and groaning with the pain of it, he nevertheless began sliding the chain back and forth along the strand of wire.

Eventually the wire, weakened by age, snapped in two. A tiny shined spot, hardly deep enough to be called a nick, in its tarnished, smudged surface was all the mark that the chain showed.

Staggering a little and putting his feet down unsteadily, Mr. Trimm left the clearing, heading as well as he could tell eastward, away from the railroad. After a mile or two he came to a dusty wood road winding downhill.

To the north of the clearing where Mr. Trimm had halted were a farm and a group of farm buildings. To the southward a mile or so was a cluster of dwellings set in the midst of more farm lands, with a shop or two and a small white church with a green spire in the centre. Along a road that ran northward from the hamlet to the solitary farm a ten-year-old boy came, carrying a covered tin pail. A young grey squirrel flirted across the wagon ruts ahead of him and darted up a chestnut sapling. The boy put the pail down at the side of the road and began looking for a stone to throw at the squirrel.

Mr. Trimm slid out from behind a tree. A hemstitched handkerchief, grimed and stained, was loosely twisted around his wrists, partly hiding the handcuffs. He moved along with a queer, sidling gait, keeping as much of his body as he could turned from the youngster. The ears of the little chap caught the faint scuffle of feet and he spun around on his bare heel.

"My boy, would you——" Mr. Trimm began.

The boy's round eyes widened at the apparition that was sidling towards him in so strange a fashion, and then, taking fright, he dodged past Mr. Trimm and ran back the way he had come, as fast as his slim brown legs could take him. In half a minute he was out of sight round a bend.

Had the boy looked back he would have seen a still more curious spectacle than the one that had frightened him. He would have seen a man worth four million dollars down on his knees in the yellow dust, pawing with chained hands at the tight-fitting lid of the tin pail, and then, when he had got the lid off, drinking the fresh, warm milk which the pail held with great, choking gulps, uttering little mewing, animal sounds as he drank, while the white, creamy milk ran over his chin and splashed down his breast in little, spurting streams.

But the boy didn't look back. He ran all the way home and told his mother he had seen a wild man on the road to the village; and later, when his father came in from the fields, he was soundly thrashed for letting the sight of a tramp make him lose a good tin bucket and half a gallon of milk worth nine cents a quart.

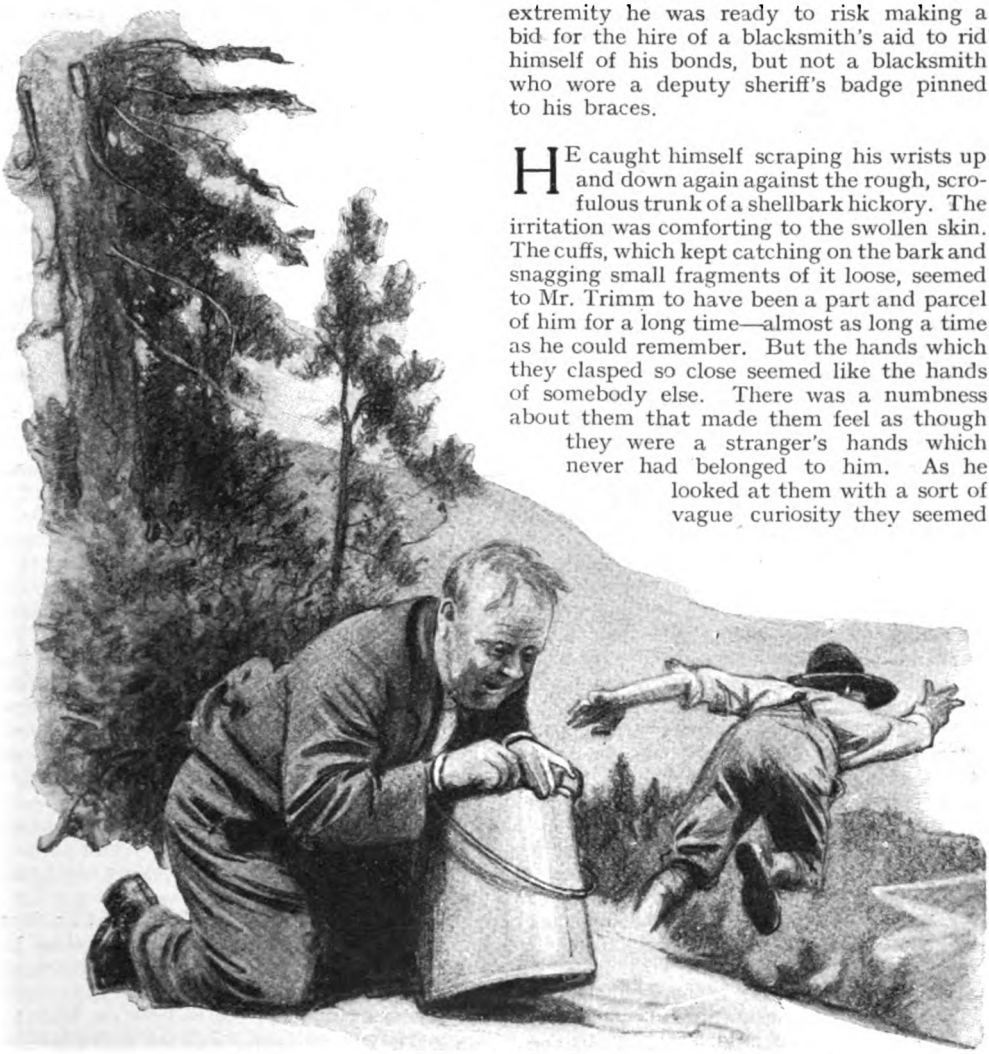
The rich, fresh milk put life into Mr. Trimm. He rested the better for it during the early part of that night in a thicket. Only the sharp, darting pains in his wrists kept rousing him to temporary wakefulness. In one of those intervals of waking the plan that had been sketchily forming in his mind from the time he had quit the clearing in the woods took on a definite, fixed shape. But how was he with safety to get the sort of aid he needed, and where?

Canvassing tentative plans in his head, he dozed off again.

ON a smooth patch of turf behind the blacksmith shop three yokels were languidly pitching horseshoes—"quoits," they called them—at a stake driven in the earth. Just beyond, the woods shredded out into a long yellow and green peninsula which stretched up almost to the back door of the smithy, so that late in the afternoons the slanting shadows of the nearmost trees fell on its roof of warped shingles. At the extreme end of this point of woods Mr. Trimm was squatted behind a big boulder, squinting warily through a thick-fringed curtain of ripened goldenrod tops. He had been there more than an hour, cautiously waiting his chance to hail the blacksmith, whose figure he could make out in the smoky interior of his shop, passing back and forth in front of a smudgy forge fire and rattling metal against metal in intermittent fits of professional activity.

From where Mr. Trimm watched to where the horseshoe-pitching game went on was not more than sixty feet. He could hear what the players said and even see the little puffs of dust rise when one of them clapped his hands together after a pitch. He judged by the signs of slackening interest that they would be stopping soon and, he hoped, going clear away.

But the smith loafed out of his shop, and after an exchange of bucolic banter with the three of them he took a hand in their game himself. He wore no coat or waistcoat, and, as he poised a horseshoe for his first cast at the stake, Mr. Trimm saw, pinned flat against the broad strap of his braces, a shiny, silvery-looking disk. Having pitched the shoe, the smith moved over into the shade, so that he almost touched the clump of undergrowth that half buried Mr. Trimm's protecting boulder. The near-sighted eyes



Had the boy looked back he would have seen a man worth four million dollars pawing with chained hands at the tight-fitting lid of the tin pail.

of the fugitive banker could make out then what the flat, silvery disk was, and Mr. Trimm cowered low in his covert behind the rock, holding his hands down between his knees, fearful that a gleam from his burnished wristlets might strike through the screen of weed growth and catch the inquiring eye of the smith. So he stayed, not daring to move, until a dinner horn sounded somewhere in the cluster of cottages beyond, and the smith, closing the doors of his shop, went away with the three yokels.

Then Mr. Trimm, stooping low, stole back into the deep woods again. In his extremity he was ready to risk making a bid for the hire of a blacksmith's aid to rid himself of his bonds, but not a blacksmith who wore a deputy sheriff's badge pinned to his braces.

HE caught himself scraping his wrists up and down again against the rough, scrofulous trunk of a shellbark hickory. The irritation was comforting to the swollen skin. The cuffs, which kept catching on the bark and snagging small fragments of it loose, seemed to Mr. Trimm to have been a part and parcel of him for a long time—almost as long a time as he could remember. But the hands which they clasped so close seemed like the hands of somebody else. There was a numbness about them that made them feel as though they were a stranger's hands which never had belonged to him. As he looked at them with a sort of vague curiosity they seemed to swell and grow, these two strange hands, while the fetters measured yards across, and the steel bands shrank to the thinness of piano wire, cutting deeper and deeper into the flesh. Then the hands in turn began to shrink down and the cuffs to grow up into great, thick things as cumbersome as the couplings of a goods truck. A voice that Mr. Trimm dimly recognized as his own was saying something about four million dollars over and over again.

Mr. Trimm roused up and shook his head angrily to clear it. He rubbed his eyes free of the clouding delusion. It wouldn't do for him to be getting light-headed.

ON a flat, shelving bluff, forty feet above a cut through which the railroad ran at a point about five miles north of where the collision had occurred, a tramp was busy, just before sundown, stirring something in an old cooking-pot that perched precariously on a fire of wood chips. This tramp was tall and spindle-legged, with reddish hair and a pale, beardless, freckled face with no chin to it and not much forehead, so that it ran out to a peak like the profile of some featherless, unpleasant sort of fowl. The skirts of an old, ragged overcoat dangled grotesquely about his spare shanks.

Desperate as his plight had become, Mr. Trimm felt the old sick shame at the prospect of exposing himself to this knavish-looking vagabond whose help he meant to buy with a bribe. It was the sight of a dainty wisp of smoke from the wood fire curling upward through the cloudy, damp air that had brought him limping cautiously across the right-of-way, to climb the rocky shelf along the cut; but now he hesitated, shielded in the shadows twenty yards away. It was a whiff of something savoury in the cooking-pot, borne to him on the still air and almost making him cry out with eagerness, that drew him forth finally. At the sound of the halting footsteps the tramp stopped stirring the mess in the pot and glanced up apprehensively. As he took in the figure of the new-comer his eyes narrowed and his pasty, nasty face spread in a grin of comprehension.

"Well, well, well," he said, leering offensively; "welcome to our city, little stranger."

Mr. Trimm came nearer, dragging his feet, for they were almost out of the wrecks of his patent-leather shoes. His gaze shifted from the tramp's face to the stuff on the fire, his nostrils wrinkling. Then slowly, "I'm in trouble," he said, and held out his hands.

"Wot I'd call a mild way o' puttin' it," said the tramp, coolly. "That purticular kind o' joolry ain't gen'lly wore for pleasure."

His eyes took on a nervous squint and roved past Mr. Trimm's stooped figure down the slope of the hillock.

"Say, pal, how fur ahead are you of yore keeper?" he demanded, his manner changing.

"There is no one after me—no one that I know of," explained Mr. Trimm. "I am quite alone—I am certain of it."

"Sure there ain't nobody lookin' fur you?" the other persisted, suspiciously.

"I tell you I am all alone," protested Mr. Trimm. "I want your help in getting these—these things off and sending a message to a friend. You'll be well paid, very well paid. I can pay you more money than you ever had in your life, probably, for your help. I can promise——"

He broke off, for the tramp, as if reassured by his words, had stooped again to his cooking and was stirring the bubbling contents of the pot with a peeled stick. The smell of the stew, rising strongly, filled Mr. Trimm with such a sharp and an aching hunger that he could not speak for a moment. He mastered himself, but the effort left him shaking and gulping.

"Go on, then, an' tell us somethin' about yourself," said the freckled man. "Wot brings you roamin' round this here railroad cut with them bracelets on?"

"I was in the wreck," obeyed Mr. Trimm. "The man with me—the officer—was killed. I wasn't hurt and I got away into these woods. But they think I'm dead, too—my name was among the list of dead."

The other's peaky face lengthened in astonishment.

"Why, say!" he began. "I read all about that there wreck—seen the list myself—say, you can't be Trimm, the New York banker? Yes, you are! Wot a streak of luck! Lemme look at you! Trimm, the swell financier, sportin' 'round with the darbies on him all nice an' snug an' reg'lar! Mister Trimm—well, if this ain't rich!"

"My name is Trimm," said the starving banker, miserably. "I've been wandering about here a great many hours—several days, I think it must be—and I need rest and food very much indeed. I don't—don't feel very well," he added, his voice trailing off.

At this his self-control gave way again and he began to quake violently as if with an ague. The smell of the cooking overcame him.

"You don't look so well, an' that's a fact, Trimm," sneered the tramp, resuming his malicious, mocking air. "But set down an' make yourself at home, an' after a while, when this is done, we'll have a bite together—you an' me. It'll be a reg'lar tea party fur jest us two."

He broke off to chuckle. His mirth made him appear even more repulsive than before.

"But looky here, you wuz sayin' somethin' about money," he said, suddenly. "Let's take a look at all this here money."

He came over to him and went through Mr. Trimm's pockets. Mr. Trimm said nothing and stood quietly, making no resistance. The tramp finished a workmanlike search of the banker's pockets. He looked at the result as it lay in his grimy palm—a moist little wad of bills and some small change—and spat disgustedly with a nasty oath.

"Well, Trimm," he said, "fur a Wall Street guy seems to me you travel purty light. About how much did you think you'd get done fur all this pile of wealth?"

" You will be well paid," said Mr. Trimm, arguing hard; " my friend will see to that. What I want you to do is to take the money you have there in your hand and buy a cold chisel or a file—any tools that will cut these things off me. And then you will send a telegram to a certain gentleman in New York. And let me stay with you until we get an answer—until he comes here. He will pay you well; I promise it."

He halted, his eyes and his mind again on the bubbling stuff in the rusted cooking-pot. The freckled vagrant studied him through his red-lidded eyes, kicking some loose embers back into the fire with his toe.

" I've heard a lot about you one way an' another, Trimm," he said. " 'Tain't as if you wuz some pore down-an'-out devil tryin' to beat the cops out of doin' his bit in stir. You're the way-up, high-an'-mighty kind of crook. An' from wot I've read an' heard about you, you never acted fair with nobody yet. There wuz that young feller, wot's his name?—the cashier—him that wuz tried with you. He went along with you in yore games an' done yore work fur you an' you let him go over the road to the same place you're tryin' to dodge now. Besides," he added, cunningly, " you come here talkin' mighty big about money, yet I notice you ain't carryin' much of it in yore clothes. All I've had to go by is yore word. An' yore word ain't worth much, by all accounts."

" I tell you, man, that you'll profit richly," burst out Mr. Trimm, the words falling over each other in his new panic. " You must help me; I've endured too much —I've gone through too much to give up now." He pleaded fast, his hands shaking in a quiver of fear and eagerness as he stretched them out in entreaty and his linked chain shaking with them. Promises, pledges, commands, orders, arguments poured from him. His tormentor checked him with a gesture.

" You're wot I'd call a bird in the hand," he chuckled, hugging his slack frame, " an' it ain't fur you to be givin' orders—it's fur me. An', anyway, I guess we ain't a-goin' to be able to make a trade—leastwise not on yore terms. But we'll do business all right, all right—anyhow, I will."

" What do you mean?" panted Mr. Trimm, full of terror. " You'll help me?"

" I mean this," said the tramp, slowly. He put his hands under his loose-hanging overcoat and began to fumble at a leather strap about his waist. " If I turn you over to the Government I know wot you'll be worth, purty near, by guessin' at the reward; an' besides, it'll maybe help to square me up fur one or two little matters. If I turn you loose I ain't got nothin' only yore word —an' I've got an idea how much faith I kin put in that."

Mr. Trimm glanced about him wildly. There was no escape. He was fast in a trap which he himself had sprung. The thought of being led to jail, all foul of body and fettered as he was, by this filthy, smirking wretch made him crazy. He stumbled backward with some insane idea of running away.

" No hurry, no hurry a-tall," gloated the tramp, enjoying the torture of this helpless captive who had walked into his hands. " I ain't goin' to hurt you none—only make sure that you don't wander off an' hurt yourself while I'm gone. Won't do to let you be damagin' yoreself; you're valuable property. Trimm, now, I'll tell you wot we'll do! We'll just back you up agin one of these trees an' then we'll jest slip this here belt through yore elbows an' buckle it around behind at the back; an' I kinder guess you'll stay right there till I go down yonder to that town that I passed comin' up here an' see wot kind of a bargain I kin strike up with the marshal. Come on, now," he threatened with a show of bluster, reading the resolution that was mounting in Mr. Trimm's face. " Come on peaceable, if you don't want to git hurt."

OF a sudden Mr. Trimm became the primitive man. He was filled with those elemental emotions that make a man see in spatters of crimson. Gathering strength from passion out of an exhausted frame, he sprang forward at the tramp. He struck at him with his head, his shoulders, his knees, his manacled wrists, all at once. Not really hurt by the puny assault, but caught by surprise, the freckled man staggered back, clawing at the air, tripped over the pot in the fire, and with a yell vanished below the smooth edge of the cut.

Mr. Trimm stole forward and looked over the bluff. Half-way down the cliff on an outcropping shelf of rock the man lay, face downwards, motionless. He seemed to have grown smaller and to have shrunk into his clothes. One long, thin leg was bent up under the skirts of the overcoat in a queer, twisted way, and the cloth of the trouser leg looked flattened and empty. As Mr. Trimm peered down at him he saw a red stain spreading on the rock under the still, silent figure's head.

Then without another look over the cliff edge he stumbled slowly down the hill, muttering to himself as he went. Just as he struck the level it began to rain, gently at first, then hard, and despite the shelter of the full-leaved forest trees he was soon wet through to his skin.

LATE that night it was still raining—a cold, steady, autumnal downpour. A huddled figure slowly climbed upon a low fence running about the house-yard of the little farm where the boy lived who got thrashed for losing a milk pail. On the wet top rail, precariously perching, the figure slipped and sprawled forward in the miry yard. It got up, painfully swaying on its feet. It was Mr. Trimm, looking for food. He moved slowly toward the house, tottering from weakness and because of the slick mud underfoot; peering near-sightedly this way and that through the murk; starting at every sound and stopping often to listen.

Caught by surprise, the man staggered back, clawing at the air, tripped, and vanished.

The outlines of the lean-to kitchen at the back of the house were looming dead ahead of him when from the corner of the cottage sprang a small terrier. It made for Mr. Trimm, barking shrilly. He retreated

backward, kicking at the little dog, and, to hold his balance, striking out with short, dabby jerks of his fettered hands—they were such motions as the terrier itself might make trying to walk on its hind legs. Still backing away, expecting every instant to feel the terrier's teeth in his flesh, Mr. Trimm put one foot into a hotbed with a great clatter of the breaking glass. He felt the sharp ends of shattered glass tearing and cutting his shin as he jerked free. Recovering himself, he dealt the terrier a lusty kick under the throat that sent it back, yowling, to where it had come from, and then, as a door jerked open, and a half-dressed man jumped out into the darkness, Mr. Trimm half hobbled, half fell out of sight behind the wood pile.

Back and forth along the lower edge of his yard the farmer hunted, with the whimpering, cowed terrier to guide him, poking in dark corners with the muzzle of his shotgun for the unseen intruder whose coming had aroused the household. In a brush pile just over the fence to the east Mr. Trimm lay on his face upon the wet earth, with the rain beating down on him, sobbing with choking gulps that wrenched him cruelly, biting at the bonds on his wrists until the sound of breaking teeth gritted in the air. Finally, in the hopeless, helpless frenzy of his agony he beat his arms up and down until the bracelets struck squarely on a flat stone and the force of the blow sent the cuffs home to the last notch so that they pressed harder and faster than ever upon the tortured wrist-bones.

When he had wasted ten or fifteen minutes in a vain search the farmer went shivering back indoors to dry out his wet shirt. But the grovelling figure in the brush pile lay for a long time where it was, only stirring a little while the rain dripped steadily down on everything.

THE wreck was on a Tuesday evening. Early on the Saturday morning following, the chief of police, who was likewise the whole of the day police force in the town of Westfield, nine miles from the place where the collision occurred, heard a peculiar, strangely weak knocking at the front door of his cottage, where he also had his office. The door was a Dutch door, sawed through the middle, so that the top half might be opened independently, leaving the lower panel fast. He swung this top half back.

A face was framed in the opening—an indescribably dirty, unutterably weary face, with matted white hair and a rime of whitish beard stubble on the jaws. It was fallen in and sunken and it drooped on the chest of its owner. The mouth, swollen and pulpy, as if from repeated hard blows, hung agape, and between the purplish parted lips showed the stumps of broken teeth. The eyes blinked weakly at the chief from under lids as colourless as the eyelids of a corpse. The bare white head was filthy with plastered mud and twigs, and dripping wet.

"Hullo, there!" said the chief, startled at this apparition. "What do you want?"

With a movement that told of straining effort the lolled head came up off the chest.

"I have come," said the spectre in a wheezing rasp of a voice which the chief could hardly hear, "I have come to surrender myself. I am Hobart W. Trimm."

"I guess you got another think comin'," said the chief, who was by the way of being a neighbourhood wag. "When last seen Hobart W. Trimm was only fifty-two years old. Besides which, he's dead and buried. I guess maybe you'd better think agin, grandpa, and see if you ain't Methus'lah or the Wanderin' Jew."

"I am Hobart W. Trimm, the banker," whispered the stranger, with a sort of wan stubbornness.

"Go on and prove it," suggested the chief, more than willing to prolong the enjoyment of the sensation. It wasn't often in Westfield that wandering lunatics came a-calling.

"Got any way to prove it?" he repeated, as the visitor stared at him.

"Yes," came the creaking, rusted hinge of a voice, "I have."

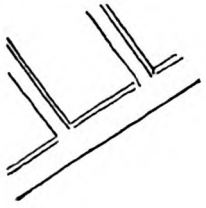
Slowly, with struggling attempts, he raised his hands into the chief's sight. They were horribly swollen hands, red with the dried blood where they were not black with the dried dirt; the fingers puffed up out of shape; the nails broken; they were like the skinned paws of a bear. And at the wrists, almost buried in the bloated folds of flesh, blackened, rusted, battered, yet still strong and whole, was a tightly locked pair of Bean's Latest Model Little Giant handcuffs.

"Great Jupiter!" cried the chief, transfixed at the sight. He drew the bolt and jerked open the lower half of the door.

"Come in," he said, "and lemme get them irons off you—they must hurt something terrible."

"They can wait," said Mr. Trimm very humbly. "I have worn them a long, long while, I think—I am used to them. Wouldn't you please get me some food first?"

HUMOUR from the HEIGHTS



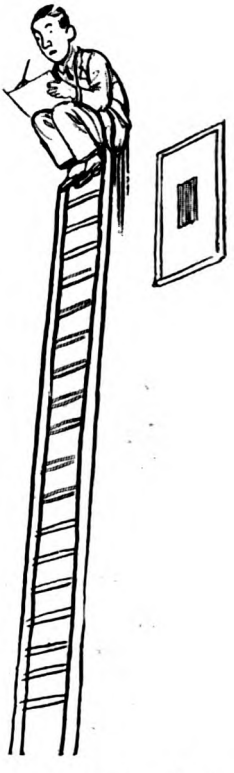
An Interview with ARTHUR WATTS

By FENN SHERIE

"THE artist who looks down on life."

That phrase comes readily to the pen-tip when writing of Arthur Watts. It is obvious, but it is also apt, because it applies not only to his peculiar fondness for viewing his subjects from aloft, but also, in a sense, to his mental outlook as a humorist. That is to say, his distinctive style is not the result of a mere striving after originality, but is expressive of the artist's attitude towards life.

MR. ARTHUR WATTS.



THE WORLD'S WORST SELLER.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

Examine his pictures and you will see that his humour, though not in the least supercilious, is always a little aloof, detached. He likes to view humanity as an entomologist might view a nest of ants; sometimes studying it in mass, as it swarms about its work or pleasures; sometimes singling out individuals and isolating them from the throng in order to draw our attention to their peculiarities. He invites us, as it were, to climb with him to the heights and become observers of life's little whimsicalities rather than participators in them.

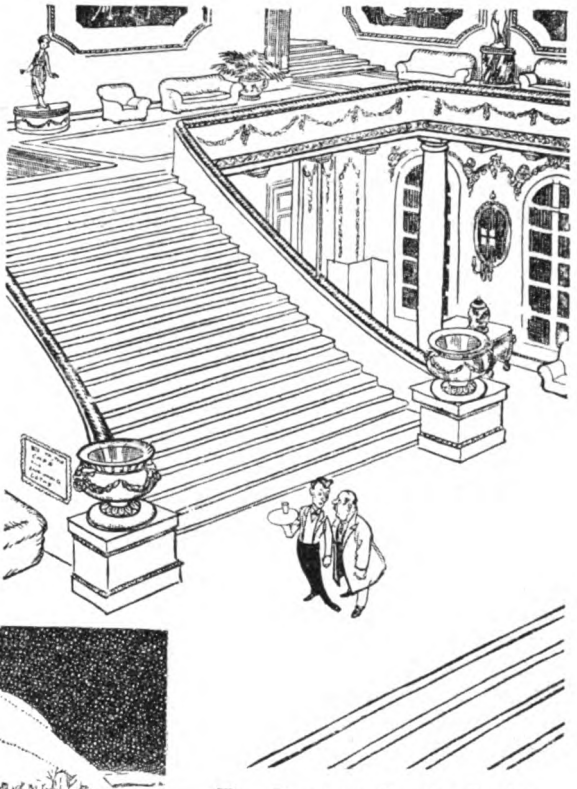
His drawings demand more than a casual glance, for they are not, as a rule, calculated to produce spontaneous laughter. Their effect upon our risibility is gradual. They produce first a smile, then a grin, and finally a chuckle. And, strangely enough, if we meditate upon them, they sometimes produce a sigh. What could be more pathetic, for instance, than the distress of the postman in the picture on this page?

Yet, when we climb down from our mental perches, we find that Arthur Watts's subjects are ourselves and our neighbours.

"Such is life," we reflect.

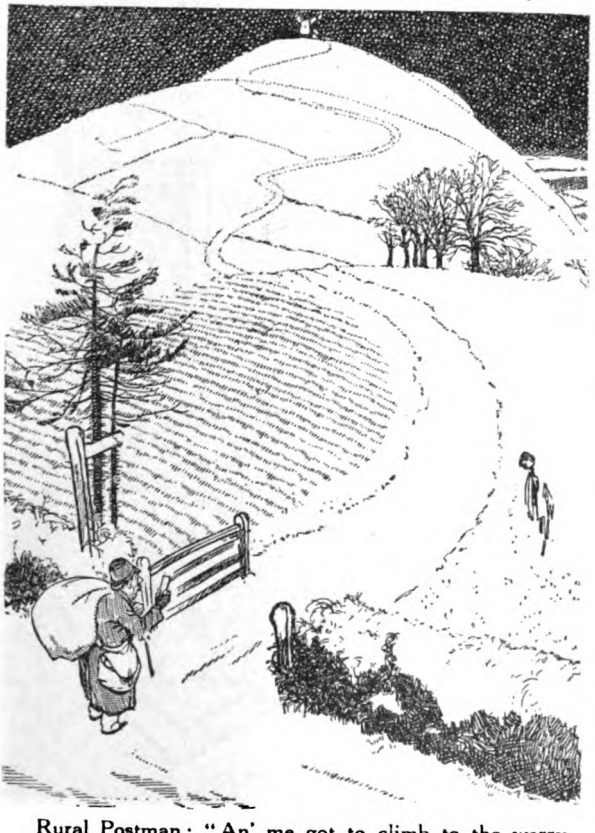
Which, of course, is exactly what the artist wants us to reflect—for, despite his assumption of aloofness, he is a humanist as well as a humorist.

There is, however, another reason for Mr. Watts's predilection for looking down on life. Ever since he was a small boy he has revealed a positive passion for climbing trees. To this day his love of loftiness shows itself as much in his daily life as it does in his drawings.



The Passenger (in the floating-palace liner): "Excuse me, steward, but could you tell me the way to the sea?"

By permission of "The Sketch."



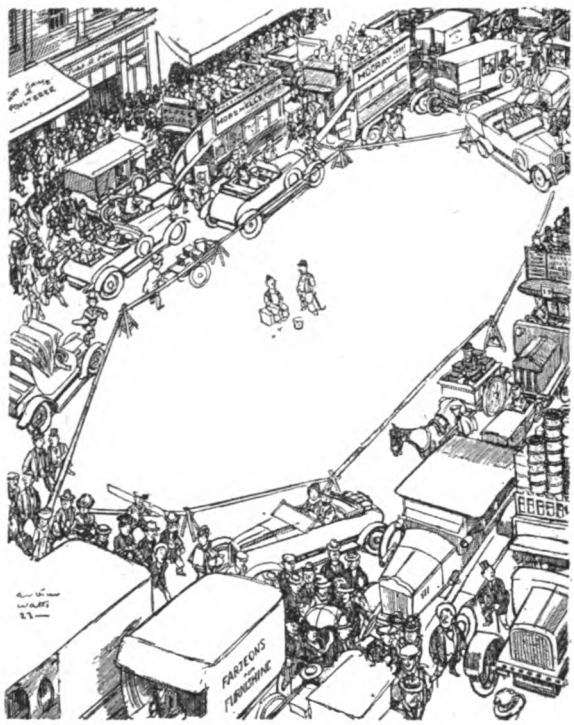
Rural Postman: "An' me got to climb to the werry top of that there hill with one Christmas card with a couple of dratted cats playing the fiddle on it."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

Which preamble brings us to our interview.

To reach his home I was obliged to scale one of the highest peaks round London. After ten minutes of steady climbing, during which my fancy turned lightly to thoughts of alpenstocks and yodels, I arrived at the house I was seeking. Having been admitted, I proceeded to mount several formidable flights of stairs, which led finally through a sort of hole in the floor into an attic studio high above the roof-tops. In a corner of this room was a vertical ladder, and there, upon the very topmost rung, sat Arthur Watts, sketch-book in hand.

"I am glad you have arrived at



THE OASIS.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

last," he said. "I was just beginning to feel faint."

"Vertigo?" I suggested.

"No—hunger," he replied. "Come and have some tea."

We had tea, Mrs. Watts officiating. I must mention, by the way, that it was properly laid on a table, for Mr. Watts does not indulge in the balance-the-cup-on-your-knee methods favoured by the pseudo-Bohemians of Chelsea, neither, incidentally, does he grow his hair long or wear a velvet coat. He is not that sort of an artist.

"I am glad you arrived in time to create a diversion," he said. "I am afraid I am rather a clock-watcher, especially when the sun is shining. You have provided me with an excellent excuse for dropping my work."

"Tell me," I asked presently, "what were you doing at the top of that ladder when I arrived?"

"Making a sketch of a piece of antique furniture," he replied. "I find it essential to make a study of every detail I require for a drawing, because I view things from such a peculiar angle that it is almost impossible to get the correct perspective without a sketch."

"Does that apply to the figures as well?" I asked.

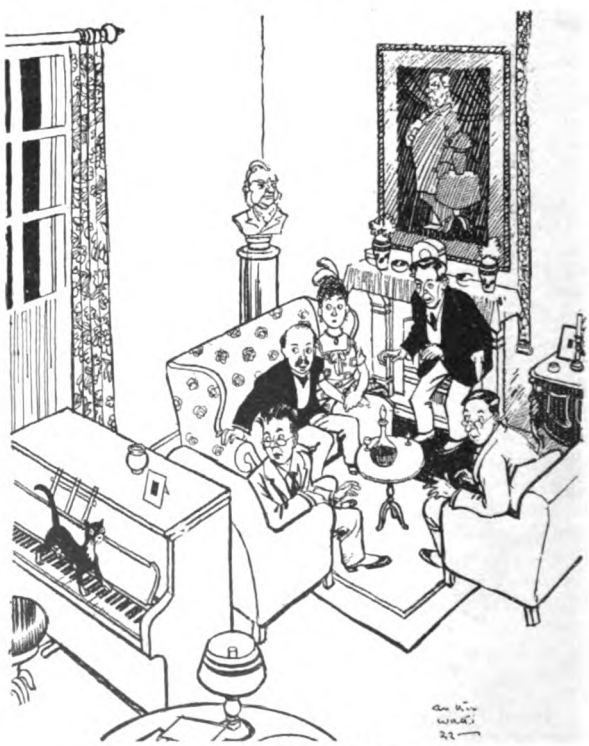
"Oh, yes. Most of the little figures that appear in my drawings are studied from a model, and I nearly always make my sketches from the top of that ladder. When no model is available I suspend a mirror from the roof of the studio and draw from my own reflection."

"At that rate, it must take you quite a time to complete a drawing containing a crowd of figures," I said.

'Well, I am a fairly rapid worker," was the reply. "And it is not always necessary for me to make a fresh study for every figure, because I keep all my rough sketches and am often able to find an old one which will help me with the particular subject I require.

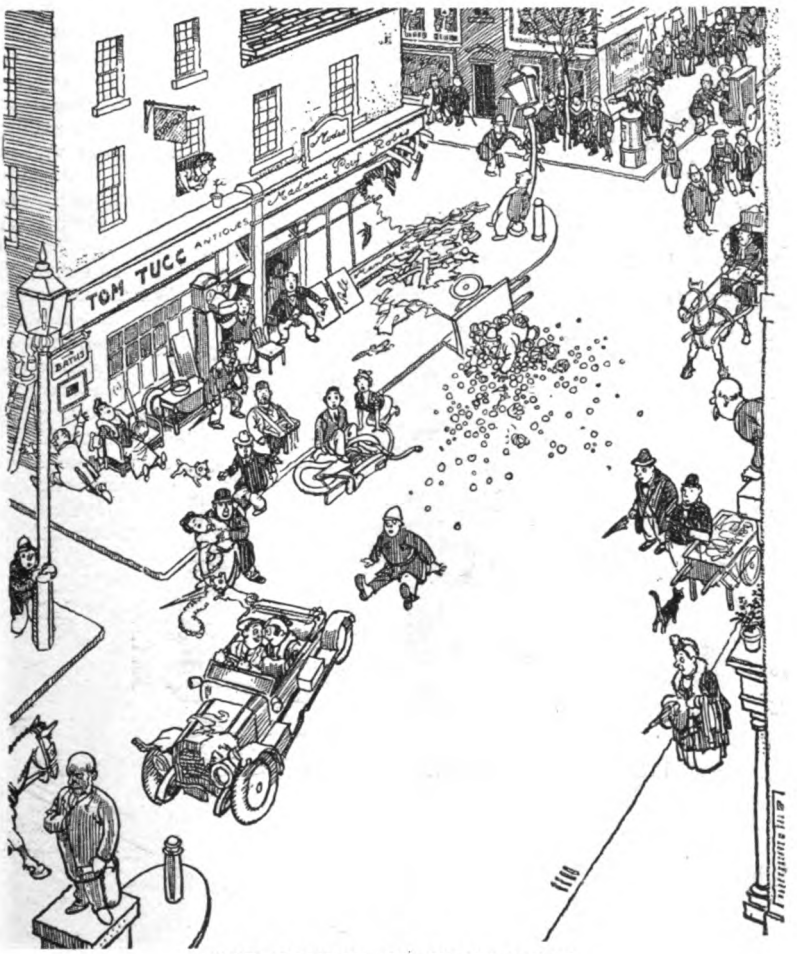
"That," he added, indicating a litter of papers heaped upon the settee, "is my reference library."

"How came you to develop this unique angle of vision?" I asked.



THE INTERRUPTED GHOST STORY.

By permission of "The Humorist."



THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

"My natural love of climbing was the primary cause," he replied. "As a youngster I used to spend hours in the tree-tops with my brother, watching the people below—and occasionally dropping acorns on their heads. Later, when I developed a natural desire to draw, I found that the top view of things interested me much more than the usual elevation. After I left school—Dulwich College it was—my parents intended that I should be an engineer, but when they discovered that I had no interest in that profession they decided to let me go my own way. I was sent to various art schools, both at home and abroad, but I am afraid I was rather lazy—I never seemed to learn much. However, I was able to draw sufficiently accurately to obtain employment in a small studio in Fleet Street, where my work consisted mainly of drawing diagrams to illustrate conjuring tricks and parlour pastimes.

"One day I went to a roller-skating rink, and whilst I was watching the people from the balcony it suddenly struck me that they were a great deal more amusing and interesting from above than they appeared at close quarters. So I made a sketch of the scene, which, to my surprise and joy, I succeeded in selling.

"For some years editors seemed to be rather hesitant as to whether my peculiar style of drawing would appeal, but these days they seem to be able to bear with me. Of course, I do not make it a rule to depict everything from above—but I prefer this treatment whenever it is possible.

"The building-up of a picture of this kind is something like weaving a pattern piece by piece, and it enables me to maintain an interest in my work. You see, although the first flash of a new idea may provide me with a little mental chuckle and a certain sense of elation, the transferring of that idea to paper is a mere technical process, and might be wearisome if I did not find a fresh interest in the progress of the picture. Therefore, as I proceed, I add a figure here and a figure there. Each figure is a fresh idea, an addition to the original theme. For example, suppose I am drawing a street scene, and have it half finished. Suddenly it occurs to me that I should like to put in a dog. Thereupon I call to mind a funny-looking dog that I have seen recently. Probably, on turning over my rough

Local Policeman (to St. George): "You killed this 'ere dragon, didn't you?"
St. George: "I did."
L. P.: "Well, you can't leave it lyin' about 'ere, you know!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

sketches, I find that I have made a study of that particular dog. So into the drawing he goes. Then, on looking at the picture again, I find that the dog seems to require a master. So I give him a suitable one—also culled from my sketch-book. Thus the drawing is gradually built up, and each addition gives me a new interest in the work.

"That, as I said, is the type of drawing I enjoy doing, although, of course, necessity demands that I should also turn my attention to subjects that are less complicated and more rapidly executed. All the same, my ideal commission would be to make one good big picture every fortnight, so that I could take my time over the work, adding numerous minor details to my heart's content."

"But this practice of making a sketch of every item from a model must present a number of difficulties," I said. "What about this bird's-eye view of a lighthouse?"

Mr. Watts took up the drawing to which I referred.

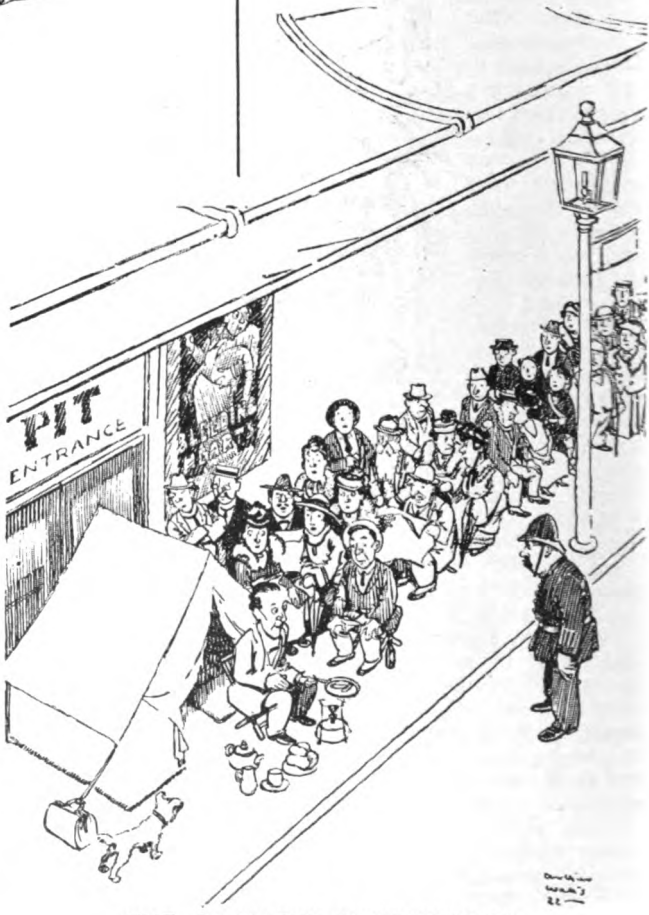
"I went up in an aeroplane to get that," he said.

Then I caught him winking at Mrs. Watts and called him to order.

"No—as a matter of fact I drew it from a model in the South Kensington Museum," he amended.

"Does not this fine detail work strain your eyes?" I asked, picking up an original drawing in which there were scores of figures, none of which was more than half an inch high.

"Not in the least."



THE COMPLETE FIRST-NIGHTER.

By permission of "The Sketch"

"Perhaps that is because you have been to sea, and your eyes have become accustomed to long and short ranges alike," I suggested brightly.

"That may be. But, to tell you the truth, although I was once a keen yachtsman, I haven't been on the water since the war."

'What is your present hobby, then?"

"Studying people. Whenever I get tired of work I like to wander down to town from Hampstead and visit the Law Courts or the picture galleries, or sit at an upper window in a restaurant in some busy thoroughfare and watch the human kaleidoscope below."

"Talking of kaleidoscopes," I said, "do you ever work in colour?"

"Frequently. It makes a pleasant change from pen drawing. Besides, I like to turn out a serious picture now and again — water-colour for preference."

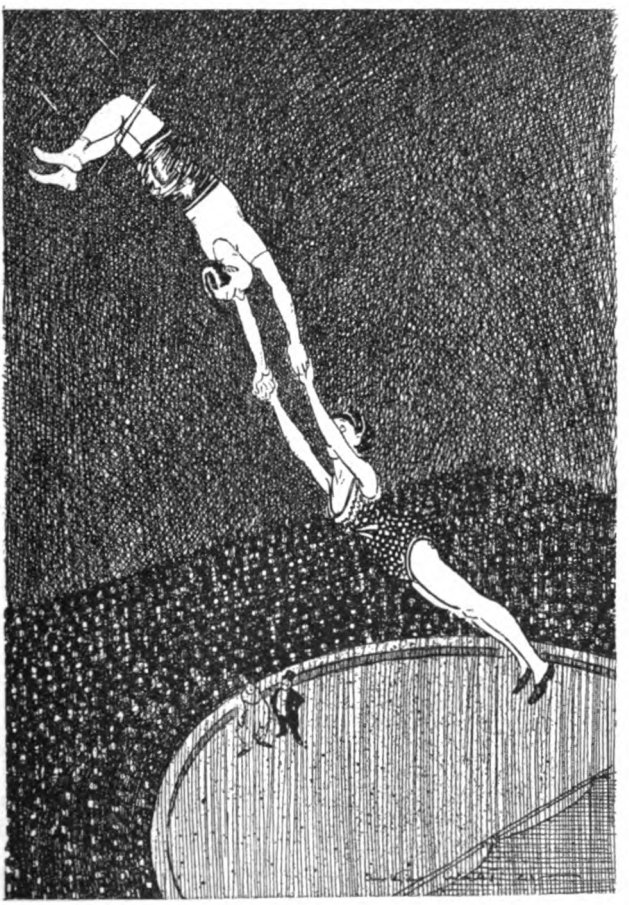
Mr. Watts showed me a number of his originals, mostly dainty fairy-like subjects embodying delicate colour schemes—poems with a paint-brush.

"Referring again to your humorous work," I said, "where do your ideas come from?"

"Most of them arise from conversation and observation. There are times, however, when I get 'dried up' and have to evolve an idea by an effort of will."

"Is that a difficult process?" I asked.

'Well, I will try to explain it to you. First of all, I sit down in my chair and close my eyes. My thoughts run amok, but presently something more or less tangible arises. I see a building. Perhaps it is a theatre or a music-hall, or a circus. I think, What is happening inside it?' I visualize two trapeze artists, hanging in mid-air, and I picture the white, upturned faces of the audience. 'The audience is thrilled,' I think to myself, 'but the trapeze performers are not. This is part of their everyday life. Everyday life' . . . I think . . . 'sleeping and eating' . . . and then the idea comes. The trapeze artists are husband and wife. The husband is suspended head downwards whilst the wife grips his hands. The audience is keyed up to a pitch of excitement.



She: "I say, George, don't forget to remind me to get them kippers on the way home."

By permission of "The Bystander."

"'I say, George,' she says to him, 'don't forget to remind me to get them kippers on the way home.'

"There is the bare idea. The rest is in the building-up of the picture."

So now, ladies and gentlemen, as the conjurers say, you know exactly how it is done.

Return of Service

By

GILBERT FRANKAU

ILLUSTRATED BY
H. K. ELCOCK

I.

THIS is one of various stories told to me by a certain celebrated brother novelist whom I encountered, suffering from a nervous breakdown and slightly the better for cocktails, in Connie's bar at Mentone on the Riviera. Because of the cocktails, I am not prepared to vouch for its accuracy. And because my friend is so much more celebrated than I am, I have not dared to do more than report his actual words. Said he :—

I'VE had a lot of fun in my life; but I always think I might have had more if I'd been born a twin. And talking of twins, I wonder whether you happen to know the "Dolphy" Forsdykes? You don't? Then I'd better describe 'em.

The 'Dolphy" Forsdykes are so called because their progenitrix, having perpetrated one precise duplication, added to the humour of things by perpetrating another—commanding, on the day that her unfortunate babes were carried to the font, that a compliant clergyman should christen the first Randolph and the second Rudolph, without even so much as a middle Christian name to help distinguish the other from which.

A rum trick—you'll admit. And what made it all the rummier was that these twins, instead of outgrowing their baby likeness to one another, continued at it, until, by the time they reached thirty, even Mrs. Forsdyke used to have her moments of hallucination when she saw them together.

These "Dolphies" (just to give you a thumb-nail sketch of them) have exactly the same shape of high forehead; exactly the same colour of slightly curly brown hair; exactly the same grey eyes; exactly the same Roman noses, and exactly (though there's no need for this) the same little, clipped bristles of brown moustache. In build, too, they are cut to pattern—possessing the identical broad shoulders, the identical narrow hips, the identical high-arched feet, and that which—at least in my opinion—is even more curious, the identical artistic hands.

I could tell you all sorts of tales about these two cut-to-pattern Forsdykes. But the best tale of all is the one which deals with Olivia Denton.

You don't know Olivia Denton, you say. Then I'll describe her as well. Olivia's a widow; and her age, charitably, is forty-three. Not that she looks her age—especially in the twilight: being one of those tall willowy women; *fausse maigre*, as the French say, and shingled into the bargain. What the barber's left of her hair is gold, with just a touch of silver in it; and her eyes are grey-green—rather a deadly combination. But there's no real harm in Olivia; though she is so frightfully rich. She's just a flirt—

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that's all. *I* always tell her she'd have been less of a flirt if she'd had children. But probably I'm wrong. Probably it's the dimple. Olivia's got the jolliest little dimple, in the jolliest little baby chin. That was what really made Randolph Forsdyke——

By Jove, my brain *is* in a rotten state. I oughtn't to be telling stories at all. No continuity! Olivia oughtn't to appear yet awhile. Not until you know a good deal more about these Forsdykes.

I told you, didn't I, how like they are in appearance. But I didn't tell you, did I, how unlike they are in character. Randolph is as serious as a judge, you see—though he isn't a judge; only one of those slightly heavy young solicitors who spend the bulk of their time drawing up wills.

Most of Randolph's clients, by the way, are old ladies who live in Belgrave Square or Tunbridge Wells: so possibly Belgrave Square and Tunbridge Wells have had a Victorian effect on his general outlook. But nobody could accuse Rudolph of the Victorian outlook. Rudolph's a real Georgian—that's why Mrs. Forsdyke was so glad when he went into the motor-business after the war.

"Rudie's such a *goer*," Mrs. Forsdyke used to say. Poor Rudie—he's married now, and doesn't get much chance of going! And Randolph's married, too. But last year—about Christmas-time it must have been—when they came out to stay with me, neither of these Forsdykes was married, only engaged.

Rudolph's *fiancée* was called Irene, Randolph's Clarice. Randolph always would talk of her as "my Clarice"—a most irritating habit. Rather a doleful kind of a guest was Randolph. Nothing seemed to amuse him; and whenever one left him alone for an hour or two, he would sit down and write reams—foolscap, mark you—to "the girl he'd left behind him."

Rudolph, who'd also left his Irene behind him, but wasn't much of a hand at corresponding with her, used to be fairly inquisitive about those letters. "What the deuce do you find to *say?*" Rudolph used to ask; and Randolph invariably used to answer: "*Say*, my dear fellow! Why, *everything*. *I* never keep any secrets from my Clarice."

Rather a nasty one for Rudolph, that! Because Rudolph—— However, let's get back to *this* story.

HE was pretty strong on fidelity, was friend Randolph; and once, after he had got hold of a particularly putrid magazine article entitled "Should Engaged Men Flirt?" he kept Rudolph and me up half the night discussing it. "*You* can laugh if you like," he said. "But the author of this article is absolutely right. Once a man's engaged to a girl, it's just the same as if he were married to her. He's under a contractual obligation; and *I* say he breaks that contractual obligation if he even looks at, far less flirts with, anybody else."

Another nasty one for Rudolph, who'd spent most of the afternoon with a grass-widow! And though Rudolph wasn't given to quarrelling, he did sound a little shirty as he retorted, "What you want, old chap, is a jolly good jolt on the sentimental plexus. Then you might be a bit more of a flesh-and-blood man and a bit less of a fish-blooded lawyer."

Anyway, Randolph thought he was shirty; and didn't say any more. But an evening or two later he told us a long story—one of the longest stories I've ever heard in my life—about a client of his who happened to be engaged to a girl in Tunbridge Wells and met another lady while he and his *fiancée* were on holiday (accompanied—Randolph was careful to tell us—by most of their prospective relations-in-law) at Eastbourne.

So far as I can recollect, the main point of the story was that the other lady took Randolph's client for a stroll on the parade; and that when they came back to their hotel, the *fiancée* met them in high dudgeon (or it may have been in a low-necked frock—I was getting a bit bored by that time and didn't listen very carefully) to break off the engagement. But I'm not at all certain there mayn't have been a breach-of-promise case into the bargain. Or at any rate the threat of one. Because otherwise the story couldn't possibly have led up to Randolph's obviously prepared peroration: "And that brings me back to what we were discussing a night or two ago—the contractual obligation of the engaged man. Believe me, Rudolph, it *is* a contractual obligation; and if only you were in *my* profession, you'd know how serious a one."

I'm bound to mention all this, just to show you the kind of young man Randolph Forsdyke was on the afternoon when I introduced him to Olivia Denton. Florence Dawkins—she's the big woman you were dancing with last night; the florid one, with the figure like a bear and nothing much to remember about her except her smile—was in the party, too; and the five of us had lunch together—at my expense—in the big restaurant upstairs, with its glorious view of sun-bathed coast.

Olivia, as you may have gathered, is an acquisition to any party; but all through that particular lunch she behaved like a perfect fool; sulked, and moped, and abused the *langouste* into the bargain. As it happened to be a most excellent *langouste*,

I knew there must be something really serious the matter. So after we'd finished, I took Olivia on one side.

"What's up?" I asked her. "What's given you the hump?"

At first she wouldn't tell me; but after a bit she confessed.

"I was forty-three yesterday," said Olivia. "And once a woman's forty-three she might as well be dead. What's the good of asking *me* to lunch with two good-looking young men? You might as well ask your great-aunt. I've lost my attraction, old friend; and that's the truth of it. I'm on the shelf—a regular dowager."

I told her, of course, not to be an adjectival fool; and when that didn't work—Olivia never *did* care for the caveman stuff, I may tell you—I patted her arm. But that didn't do any good either.

"I'm a dowager," Olivia kept on saying. "Next season you'll see me having to pay to dance with the *gigolos*."

"Rubbish," said I. "What you need is a new flirt. That'll put new confidence into you. And confidence—at your age—is the whole battle. Now what about Rudie Forsdyke? He's just your type—a regular lady's man, but quite harmless."

"Harmless!" sniffed Olivia. "So, in your opinion, it's come to that.'

"It always was that," I corrected. "Don't pretend you were ever a really truly vamp, my dear."

She let me have it my own way; but I could see that I'd stung her; and by the time we re-assembled for coffee in the big lounge, she'd chucked moping and begun to sparkle. That's to say her conversation sparkled; while her eyes—I told you, didn't I, that Olivia's eyes were grey-green—grew a little misty. The soulful touch, don't you know. At least, that was how it struck Randolph.

Oh, yes, I said *Randolph*. You see, I hadn't told her Randolph was harmless.

I suppose I really ought to have shooed Olivia off Randolph: at least as much for her own sake as for his. I did try to, just once, when Florence—who never can sit still for more than twenty minutes together—decided on tennis.

"Don't you play with *that* Mr. Forsdyke," I said, looking at Randolph. 'You play with the other one."

"But I want to play with *this* Mr. Forsdyke," she answered, laying a hand (and very sweet hands she has) for just a second longer than was absolutely necessary on Randolph's arm; and giving me, as she did so, one of those "Keep-off-the-grass" looks that make a man who knows anything about the sex wish he'd been born a gorilla.

So after that I left Randolph to his fate. He was pretty uncomfortable by now, was Randolph. Thinking about "my Clarice," I imagine; and wondering what "my Clarice" would say if she could see that hand on his arm. And Rudolph—who was beginning to tumble to the situation—didn't make him any more comfortable by saying, "I'm afraid you're a very dangerous woman, Mrs. Denton. So don't you think you'd better play with me, and leave my much-engaged brother alone?"

Olivia, quite obviously, adored that remark. But Randolph didn't. He told Rudolph so—in slightly stronger language than the occasion merited; and when he went on, "Considering that I play at least half-fifteen better than you do, and Mrs. Denton's out of practice, *your* suggestion would simply mean a walk-over for Miss Dawkins and myself," *I* began to sit up and take notice. It's a pretty dangerous experiment—you'll understand—to put the Olivias of this world on their mettle.

However, the thing was done by then; and as I watched Randolph climb into Rudolph's two-seater (they had to go back to my villa to change into their tennis kit) I washed my hands of the whole affair. "She won't do him any harm," I decided. "Nothing in petticoats could do Randolph any harm. Rather the reverse."

Still, I wouldn't have been human if I hadn't strolled down to the club—it was about three o'clock by then—to watch the game.

Olivia and Florence didn't stroll with me. They came on after, in Olivia's new coupé; and, as it so happened, Rudolph's two-seater very nearly collided with them at the gate. Whereupon Randolph accused Rudolph of being a "rotten driver," and Rudolph retorted, "Rotten driver, indeed! Why, you can't drive at all!"

I gathered from that that Rudolph must have been getting his own back while they changed. And I also gathered (by the way, it would have warmed the cockles of Cleopatra's heart to see the smile Olivia gave Randolph as he helped her out of her car) that they must have had some sort of a wager on the game. Because the first thing Rudolph said as we went through the gate was, "Mrs. Denton, you and I are to play together after all—and, believe me, we've *got* to win."

II.

HAVING reached this point in his narrative, my celebrated friend called for his second cocktail; and over it threatened his first digression.

"I've often wondered," digressed he, "whether Randolph, when he made that

The five of us had lunch together—at my expense—in the big restaurant upstairs, with its glorious view of sun-bathed coast.

wager, did so because he was afraid of partnering Olivia. It's a possibility, you'll admit. And I've often wondered, too, precisely how far the sex-motive affects 'mixed' games. It's rather a fascinating subject for psychological inquiry, don't you think? Freudian!"

Whereupon I told my celebrated friend

to emulate one of our plutocratic colleagues and "strike on"; which he did thus:—

All right. I'll cut the cackle—and keep psychology out of the thing as much as I can. Where was I? Oh, yes—just going into the club. Well, the club was pretty empty that afternoon; and after the Dolphies had taken off their coats (they always wore the same coats for tennis—blue flannel ones, with brass buttons) and emerged from the dressing-room, Florence led them on to her favourite Number One Court. Then the fun began.

A viler exhibition of the game than Randolph Forsdyke put up against Rudie I've never seen. He started by losing his own service; went on to lose Rudie's; and ended—hang it, you might let me have my own way about that Freudian psychological stuff—by losing his wool so completely that even Florence—and she's the best-tempered player I know—though she didn't say "damn" every time she netted a drive, and "blast" every time she missed a volley, couldn't help an occasional remark. One of those remarks—I seem to remember—had to do with "rabbits"; and another—that must have been at the end of the seventh game, when they were being led by five-two—with "poaching." And Randolph answered both of those remarks, under his breath, with a word that would have burned Belgrave Square to its basements.

What that first set cost Randolph Forsdyke in cash, I don't know. But what it cost him in nervous energy would have been palpable to an untutored savage. I—not being an untutored savage—felt rather sorry for him; sorrier still when Rudolph practically forced him into a revenge.

YOUV'E asked me not to drag in Freud—and I won't. But if ever I saw a practical demonstration of the sex-complex I saw it that afternoon, somewhere about the middle of the second set, when Florence was serving to Rudolph and Randolph and Olivia were facing one another at about four yards' range across the net. Olivia was smiling—a queer sort of Mona Lisaish smile that seemed to say, "Don't you hate this net being between us? Don't you wish we were both on the same side?" And Randolph's grey eyes wore the sort of look Saint Anthony's must have worn when *he* was put through it. Only Anthony didn't have to play tennis while the lady was tempting him.

Poor Randolph did his best to keep those eyes of his on the ball; and stand sideways to his drives, and all that sort of thing. But though he did his best, he simply couldn't manage it—and that set he and Florence lost to love. Florence was rather a sight after they'd finished. She's not pretty at the best of times; and panting from one side-line to the other with a partner who takes it as a personal insult if you ask him to do anything, except serve, from the back of the court, is no beautifier for a twelve-stone woman. But Olivia, in her white linen, hadn't turned a single hair.

"You poor man!" cooed Olivia, after Florence had insisted on changing partners. "You *did* have bad luck. Let's see if I can bring you any better."

Randolph didn't answer that remark under his breath. He just answered it with his eyes; and his first service to his brother skimmed the cord like a driven partridge. Talk about a man's "coming into his form"! Believe me, it was something more than that—the way Randolph started to play once he got the partner his ego really wanted. Nobody could have beaten him that afternoon. Nobody!

He and Olivia—I wish you could have seen his face every time she handed him the balls for his service—won that third set six-one with about as much effort as it would take Tilden and Johnston to wipe you and me out of the first round at Wimbledon. And after that Rudie and Florence were simply eaten up.

Randolph, I'm sorry to say, didn't make a much better winner than he had a loser. He chuckled a little every time his return of service came off the rolled sand like a machine-gun bullet ricocheting off an armour-plate; and he even started ordering Olivia about. You know the sort of thing: "Don't try any fancy-work, partner, just lob them," or, "Good—only keep *well* behind that base-line," or, "You took your eye off that one, didn't you?"

Olivia—being Olivia—didn't answer him back; only went on smiling in that same deadly Mona Lisaish way. Very submissive was Olivia; and terribly admiring every time he brought off one of his smashes. In fact, by the time they reached the final game but one of that final set, she became so submissive and so admiring that any man except Randolph Forsdyke would have had a pretty fair inkling of what she was after. But Randolph—being Randolph, and by now thoroughly above himself—took the whole thing as a tribute to his own prowess; didn't even tumble to what was happening when, just as they began the last game of all, she said, gathering up the balls for him, "Now, Mr. Forsdyke! Four more of these *marvellous* services and we'll shake hands on a great victory."

I won't bother you with any description of those four "marvellous" services. But I *do* wish you could have seen the way Olivia held out her hand, the way Olivia looked at

Poor Randolph did his best to keep those eyes of his on the ball. But he simply couldn't manage it—and that set he and Florence lost to love.

her partner, when it was all over. Talk about vamp-stuff! Talk about the silent, soulful, "Oh, you glorious he-man" glint in the feminine eyeball! I tell you, Helen of Troy herself would have been a mere giggling flapper in comparison with Olivia Denton as she came off the court that afternoon. Why, the very way she said, "Tea? Oh, yes, Mr. Forsdyke, I'd simply adore a cup of tea," would have given *anybody* that necessary jolt on the sentimental plexus.

I'd like to drag in a bit more Freud here, or possibly Weininger, to account for the care Randolph took to make himself presentable for our little tea-party on the pavilion veranda.

Randolph's usually a bit careless about his clothes, you see, but that afternoon he came out of the men's dressing-room looking a regular dandy. He'd smoothed his brown hair till it shone; and his face, too, was shining like—like a polished teapot. While as for his blue flannel coat—you know how difficult it is to keep a blue flannel coat *really* tidy—it was so well brushed, and so well put on, and so generally immaculate that, just for the moment, I thought it couldn't be his own but Rudolph's.

Olivia had done good work in the dressing-room, too. I've never seen her eyes looking better, or her lips—and my own opinion is that she'd had one tiny surreptitious cocktail into the bargain. Anyway, she might have been thirty, as we sat there having our tea, with the shadows of the mountains creeping across the rolled sand, and that peculiar perfume which you only get in this part of the world and at twilight blowing in to us from across the sea.

Venus came from across the sea, didn't she? I thought so—though I have forgotten most of my mythology. And, believe me, Olivia Denton was all Venus to Randolph Forsdyke that afternoon. Even Florence noticed it—sideways over many tea-cups. And Rudie—— Well, Rudie and I had all *we* could do to prevent either of them from seeing what fun *we* were getting out of the business.

However, I won't worry you with tea-time. Tea-time—so to speak—was only a preliminary. It was after tea that Olivia really got going.

BY then Randolph Forsdyke might have been a schoolboy with his first love affair. Sheepish, don't you know! And tongue-tied. With the codfish look about his eyes.

Codfish is rather apt, really. Because Olivia had hooked him; and *I* knew—the moment the five of us left the club and began arguing as to who should drive who back to my villa for a little drink—that she wasn't going to unhook him tell he'd served his purpose.

"You'll come with me, won't you, partner?" she cooed. "I'm simply dying to show you how well I drive my new car." And Randolph—she had her hand on his arm again by that time—just climbed in without a word.

I remember that Rudie stared at Randolph as the two of them drove off; and I remember that Florence Dawkins began to say something—and suddenly thought better of it. Also, I'm pretty positive that Olivia waved to me before they got round the corner. But none of that really matters. What matters is the time those two took to drive the four miles to my villa.

We'll call it an hour. But it may have been quite a while longer than that. It certainly seemed more than an hour from the time *we* passed them, about half a mile away from the club, till the time their head-lights came crawling through my gates.

There I go again—anticipating things. Sorry! What you'd like to know, of course, is what went on *before* those head-lights came crawling through my gates. Well, *that's* easy—because I happen to know all about it. How? Oh, never mind how! Just take it that the thing occurred like this.

After we'd passed them, Olivia speeded up a bit; and Randolph, who'd hardly spoken a word since they'd started, called her attention to the sunset.

"Sunset?" said Olivia. "Oh, yes. I adore sunsets. Aren't you glad we won our match?"

"Rather," said Randolph—and went glum again, for a good half-mile.

Olivia didn't mind his being glum. What she did mind—and now you'll understand how I happen to know all about that hour—was the knowledge that his glumness came from sheer unadulterated funk. "He's thinking about that *fiancée* of his," decided Olivia; "wondering what she'd say if she knew." And after that she, too, went a bit glum, being—as I think I've already told you—a perfectly harmless woman, who'd no more have stolen "my Randolph" from "my Clarice" than she'd have purloined a silver spoon from a stranger's dinner-table.

Poor Randolph, however, didn't realize that. He only realized what a glorious evening it was, and what a sunset they'd seen together, and how well he'd played tennis, and how white Olivia's hands were, and what a long way it was from this Riviera to the little house in Chislehurst where he would have to settle down with Clarice.

Atmosphere, you'll understand. It's played old Harry with most of us in its

time. But very few of us take it as seriously as poor Randolph did. It sent him all of a dither; and by the time Olivia had made up *her* mind what she was going to do about things, *he* hadn't got a mind at all. He was just clay—nice soft human clay for her modelling.

They were away from the sea by that time; climbing the last mile of mountain road. Dusk had fallen; and the carnation-growers gone home.

"It's all so peaceful," said Olivia suddenly. "Like a dream."

"Rather," repeated Randolph—and looked a thousand ineffabilities in the gloom.

She slowed at his "Rather"; thought better of it; dabbed at her accelerator. Her face, averted from him, showed only its delicate profile. Her hands, ungloved, were like white temptations on the wheel. All about him was the perfume of the night; and mingling with it a subtler perfume—the perfume of Olivia's Venushood.

"Like a dream," she repeated. "I sometimes think all life's a dream, Mr. Forsdyke. It passes so quickly. This afternoon, now—and this evening. They've been so glorious—and yet, by to-morrow, we shall have forgotten them." And at that, mysteriously, the car stopped.

The car stopped, with a little gurgle of protest, close to the overhanging rocks at the right of the road; and before Randolph Forsdyke could find any answer to those last words Olivia had given one tiny cry of fear.

"Something's gone wrong," cried Olivia. "Oh, Mr. Forsdyke, something's gone wrong."

Randolph Forsdyke, in that particular moment, didn't care what had gone wrong. He still wanted to find some answer—some terribly vital answer—to those last words. And he was still trying to find that answer when Olivia, jamming on her hand-brake, gave another tiny cry—this time of relief.

"It's all right," cried Olivia this time. "It's all right, Mr. Forsdyke. I—I was frightened we were going to slip backwards. But we're not going to slip backwards; and if—if you'll just help me out——"

So he helped her out; and, as their hands met, found his tongue.

You mustn't ask me to describe that scene in detail. You mustn't ask me to tell you just what Randolph Forsdyke said to Olivia Denton, or just what Olivia Denton said to Randolph Forsdyke as he helped her out of the car. Because, frankly, I wasn't told that part—only scraps of it—just the "Don'ts" and the kisses, so to speak.

There were several "Don'ts," I gathered—but more kisses—and a good deal of the "If only I'd met you sooner, dearest," kind of stuff—and at least one "Olivia, my darling, even if I am bound in honour to another, even if to-night can never be more than just a precious memory, promise me that it always *shall* be a memory that you'll never—*never*—forget."

Also, knowing Olivia, I'm pretty sure that she must have said something about being "too old" for him; and that he must have sworn she wasn't a day too old; that it was only on account of that "other woman," etcetera, etcetera. But that—I should imagine—took place a little later, after Olivia had succeeded in re-starting her engine. Because by that time (this I do know for certain) Randolph was in one of those "honour rooted in dishonour" moods when a man will say, and do, practically anything.

There were more "Don'ts" after they'd got the engine going, I imagine; and more kisses; and it's just possible that Olivia—being the woman she was—had one little moment of repentance. Still, one's got to give Olivia the credit of playing *her* game right out to the very end, right up to that last "No, Randolph. No! We can't even be friends. It's—it's too dangerous, my dear. So you mustn't write to me—you must just give me your address—one of your cards will do—and believe me that if ever I feel it *is* safe for us to be friends, *I'll* do the writing."

So Randolph, still all of a dither, took the note-case out of the jacket he was wearing, and a card out of the note-case—and after that Olivia brought him back to us where we sat drinking our cocktails. I don't think we chaffed either of them much when they told us how the car had broken down. Randolph was always so damn respectable, you see; so one couldn't very well say anything to him. And I'd as soon have played hide-and-seek with a female jaguar as have ragged Olivia (or any other woman) while she had that particular "Thanks-for-my-good-feed-of-Nestlé's-milk" look in her grey-green eyes.

III.

MY celebrated friend, before his nervous breakdown, used to spoil quite a number of his stories by leaving their *dénouements* to his readers' imagination: so that I was not surprised when, having staggered thus far through this one, he called for his third cocktail, pointed one finger at me across our marble-topped table, took a deep breath, and went on:—

Here endeth the first part of the tale. You'll admit it has a certain humour: but

"Olivia, even if to-night can never be more than just a precious memory, promise me that it always *shall* be a memory that you'll never—*never*—forget."

the real humour, *I* think, is in the sequel. Only, you've got to have a tidy bit of imagination—at least as far as Randolph is concerned—to realize the full extent of that particular jest.

Randolph, you see, didn't take that little business about the visiting-card lightly. It worried him: made him think about that client of his, and the Tunbridge Wells girl, and breach-of-promise cases, and all that sort of thing. He couldn't help feeling, too, that he'd made a complete ass of himself; and even after he'd got over the worst of his jolt on the sentimental plexus—and *that* took the best part of six weeks—he used to wake up in the night wondering whether Olivia would write, and what she would write, and how on earth he, with his legal mind, could have been so unwise as to give her his private address, and half-a-hundred other wonders that any ordinary man would have dismissed in a jiffy. Also, he had an idea that it wouldn't be fair to marry "my Clarice" without confessing that he'd kissed another woman while he was engaged to her.

However, he didn't confess any of those kisses to "my Clarice"; any more than Rudie confessed any of his little peccadilloes to his Irene. He just went to the altar, along with Rudie. They had a double wedding, you'll be interested to hear—all fizz and flowers and speeches—and I was Rudie's best man; and it was I, *moi qui vous parle*, who happened to be the only one present when—just as those two Dolphies were dressing to go off on their respective honeymoons—Rudie's manservant came knocking on the door with the last wedding-present.

It wasn't a big wedding-present, you must understand—just a long, thin, unimportant-looking kind of a package; and inside the package a little jewel-case; and inside the jewel-case, a tie-pin—the sort of tie-pin a woman *would* buy. All setting and no stones, don't you know. Expense without value, so to speak.

However, we won't bother too much about the pin. Because what really interested *me* was the visiting-card. The visiting-card, you see, happened to fall out of the case, face downwards, while Rudolph was examining the pin; so that I couldn't help reading the little message on the back of it: "I want you to wear this—not to-day, but on *our* anniversary. Will you? I know you will. And to-day, be happy: as I am going to be happy, whenever I think of that one sunset we watched together."

That message was signed, but only with the one name, "Olivia"—and the moment I handed it over to Rudolph Forsdyke *I* knew——

BUT at this point I—his humble reporter—observing that my celebrated friend had finished his third cocktail, took the liberty of interrupting.

"You mean," interrupted I, "the moment you handed over Olivia's visiting-card to *Randolph* Forsdyke, you knew——"

"Pardon me," retorted my celebrated friend. "But even with this nervous breakdown of mine, I'm still capable of finishing my own stories. I handed that visiting-card to *Rudolph* Forsdyke: firstly because—as I've already told you—*he* was examining the tie-pin; and secondly because it wasn't Olivia's visiting-card at all, but one of his own."

"You say that the card was Rudie's?"

"Precisely. And the package was addressed to him, too."

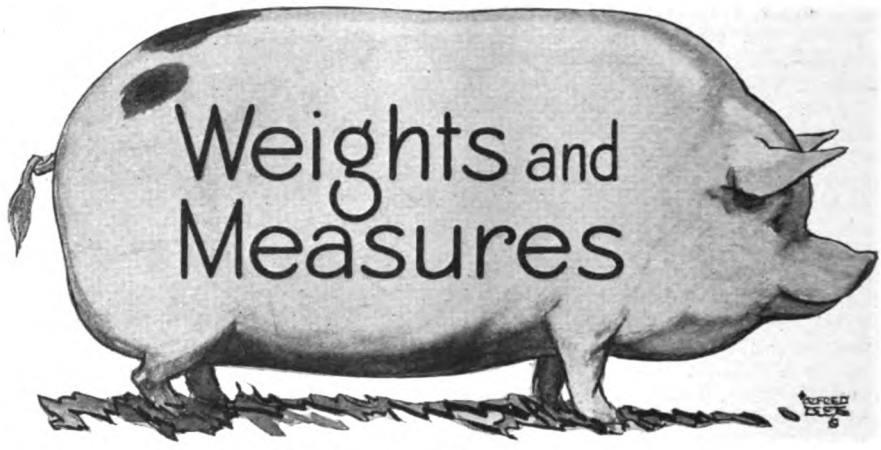
"But how on earth——"

"How on earth!" repeated my celebrated friend, permitting himself, for the first time that afternoon, the smile of the thoroughly self-satisfied raconteur. "But, my dear fellow, isn't it obvious? Don't *you* see what had happened? Have you forgotten what I told you about that blue flannel tennis-coat Randolph had on when he came out of the dressing-room? Have you forgotten the dither poor Randolph was in when he took out the note-case?"

"Then Randolph——"

"Put on the wrong coat, took out the wrong note-case, and gave Olivia the wrong card? Why, of course he did. And never knew he had either—not right up to that last minute (he was in pants and shirt-sleeves at the time, and that didn't detract an iota from the fun of the thing) when Rudie went over to him and said, holding out the tie-pin and the visiting-card, 'I say, old man, can *you* throw any light on this mysterious bit of jewellery? *I* don't know anyone called Olivia, except that rather jolly widow we met at Mentone.'

"And after that—mainly because poor Randolph's face, though he did try *one* bluff, gave the whole show away in about sixteen seconds—Rudolph didn't say very much more about Olivia or the tie-pin. He just concentrated, for the best part of a quarter of an hour, on 'contractual obligations.' Talking of which, don't you think it's your turn to stand drinks?"



By

LYNN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED LEETE

IT was Miss Armytage of the Hall begun the whole thing. She was very fond of all kinds of animals; but, above all, she loved a good pig. In her day where the landlord led the tenant followed after. So she put us all in the notion of pigs; and the Ballygullion pigs very soon begun to make a mark in the world. At first the farmers had it all among themselves; but when Miss Armytage started puttin' up a special money prize at the Cattle Show, with a Silver Cup as big as a bucket, the town tenants took to pigs too.

There was great competition the first year, and a good deal of money changed hands. They say it was worth more to Tom Torrens, the booky, than the Ballygullion races.

Tammas McGorrian won; and there was a deal of grumblin' about it. His wife's sister was married to Miss Armytage's steward, and Tammas was supposed to have got the pick of the Berkshire pig's litter—a most unfair thing. So Miss Armytage gave out that there'd be no pickin' of the Berkshire pigs next spring, but that all the tenantry, town and country, would draw for them. Great satisfaction the new rule gave, and a terrible rush there was for tickets.

The Berkshire pig had a very fine litter that spring. There wasn't the value of sixpence between any of the young ones, barrin' a wee rig of a thing that was no size at all; so it was left out of the draw altogether. At the heels of the hunt Miss Armytage came into the yard, and seein' the wee discard of a pig all by itself, she sent it to the Widow Richardson, a poor bein' that lived in the outskirts of Ballygullion, and knocked out a kind of an existence flowerin' handkerchiefs—a charity, if ever there was one. I fetched the wee pig down to her in my own cart, and troth, from all the provisions I seen about the place, I didn't think there was much chance of it gettin' any bigger.

All we could do for a while after this was to wait and see whose pig was thrivin' the best. The first pig to make any name was wee Jones's, the draper's. People said it was because he mixed up chopped straw hats with its food, the year before bein' wet, and him with two or three crates of hats not sold; but I wouldn't like to swear to that story. Anyway, his pig was doin' well, and the whole town of Ballygullion knew it, for wee Jones was a bummin' kind of a crather, and published the weight of his pig round the whole district instead of lyin' low and gettin' a bit of money on before the odds got short.

The next pig that begun to be talked about was Felix O'Loan's, the pawnbroker's. Felix ran a big general store in Ballygullion forbye the pawnshop, and had made a bit of money, and was very pompous and swelled-out over it, and always boastin' about his cleverness and his honesty; though I may tell ye there was them about the town and district of Ballygullion that

had their doubts whether he had both of the same gifts. A couple or three years before, he had bought a wee bit of land on the outskirts, and built a big gazebo of a house on it that he called his country seat, and set up to be a bit of a farmer—just in a gentlemanly way, as the wife used to put it. Felix's heart was set on the Cup, and he was willin' to spend twenty pound on foodstuffs to win it; and I may tell you there was a good many people wouldn't have grudged double the amount to baulk him. His pig was a kind of a dark horse, for he was a deal too fly to give away the weight of it; but the rumour still grew that he was goin' to give wee Jones a tight run for the Cup.

It come into my head that I might make a pound or two on a bet if I could only get the money on early enough, and the next market day I made it my business to get hold of Big Billy Lenahan of the Hills; for Billy generally made it *his* business to know all that was to be knowed in the bettin' line.

"Which do you think I should back, Billy?" sez I—"Jones's pig or Felix's? As far as I can gather, there's nobody else in it at all."

"Hold on, now, is there not?" sez Billy, lcokin' very knowin'. "There might be an outsider would be worth riskin' a trifle on."

"Who, Billy?" sez I, all agog. "It's news to me."

"What about the Widow Richardson?" sez Billy.

"Ah, get along out of that, Billy," sez I. "Sure, her pig wasn't the size of a cat the last time I seen it."

"Well, it's the size of two cats now," sez he. "And it'll be the size of a pig before it's done. Come on down till ye see it."

So away we went to see the widow's pig, and the divil a such an improved animal ever ye seen—fat and sonsy, and as big for its weeks as any pig I ever reared. Only that I knew it by two black spots near the tail there's nobody could ha' persuaded me it had grew out of the wee dwarf I'd fetched down to the widow in a charity a while before.

"In the name of goodness, Billy," sez I, "what has the widow been feedin' the brute on, or where did she get the money to pay for it?"

"Wait till ye see herself," sez Billy, 'and then you'll have a guess."

And, 'deed, if the pig was gettin', it wasn't hard to tell who was wantin'; for there was very little of the Cup-winner about the appearance of the widow. I always like to say a civil word to a woman when I meet her, but, troth, the best I could do for the widow was to pay her a compliment about her pig. It perked her up a good deal, too; all the same, when we come away from the pig-crew, I could see she was in poor heart.

"Look here, Billy," sez I, as we went down the road, "cups is all very well in their way; but that woman'll kill herself."

"Divil a bit of her," sez Billy, very cheerful—for he was a hard-hearted ruffian. "She's been livin' on the smell of an oiled rag ever since the man died. The price of two daisies on the corner of a handkerchief would keep her for a week. The whole elastic is gone out of her stomach. A good meal's meat would kill her. But the serious part is that her money's done, and she'll not be able to keep up the feedin' of the pig.

"Hold on," sez Billy. "There might be an outsider would be worth riskin' a trifle on."

Wait a minit, now, till I think. Tell me, Pat," sez he, suddenly, "would ye take a chance?"

"If it was a good chance, I might," sez I.

"Well, will ye go halves with me in feedin' the widow's pig from this to Cupday?"

"I will not," sez I. "What good would that do me, here or hereafter? I'll go halves with ye in feedin' the widow, if ye like. That might do us some good in the next world, anyway."

"Hold on, now," sez Billy. "It would pay us to feed the pig. We could get twenty to one again it, easy; and if we put two pound apiece on it, that would be forty pound. Two or three pound would feed the pig, and we'd be eighteen or nineteen pound apiece to the good, forbye doin' a kind turn to the widow. Think it over, now. I'll call back in a day or two."

But when he did call he was all down in the mouth.

"Would you believe it, Pat," sez he, "but Felix O'Loan is goin' to supply the widow with yellow-meal on credit."

"Felix is?" sez I. "You're dotin', man."

"He is, now, I tell ye," sez Billy. "He's got wind of how well her pig was doin', and he's on to the same game as ourselves."

"Well, let him feed away," sez I. "It's so much saved. Can't we back the pig, anyway?"

"No fear," sez Billy, shakin' his head very wise. "I'm not such a fool as to put money on anythin' Felix has his hand in. He's an old schemer; and ye couldn't tell what he'd be up to. There's honester men than Felix earnin' their livin' with three thimbles and a pea."

I couldn't help smilin' to myself a bit to hear Billy; for between you and me Billy was no way tendher in the conscience himself when there was a pound or two to be made. However, I said nothin', and we agreed to lie low for a week or two and gather what information we could.

"Jones's is the pig for our money, Pat," sez he. "I hear it's gettin' a powerful size."

"But what about the widow's?" sez I.

"Clean down and out," sez Billy. "All gone to scrapin's. The only thing it's fit for now is a coursin' match, or huntin' rats. It's as long in the body as a ferret, and as thin in the flank as a runnin' dog."

"What's gone wrong with it, Billy?" sez I; "and it thrivin' so well before."

"I don't know," sez he, "unless it's doin' it to spite Felix. But go and look at it yourself."

SO I went down that way the next day, and on my road who should I take up with but Felix himself; and troth as I watched him rollin' along I couldn't help thinkin' if he'd enther himself for the Cup he'd beat any pig in the parish.

"This is very sad about the widow's pig, Mr. Murphy," sez he. "I was tryin' to do the poor woman a good turn, seein' she's one of my tenantry, but nothin' has come of my good intentions. It's a pity, too. A fine big reachy pig, and would have carried a great weight if it could have been fattened."

"And is it hopeless, Mr. O'Loan?" sez I.

"Teetotally so," sez Felix. "The animal is in a state of great emaciation. A very melancholy case. You'll see for yourself."

And when I looked at the pig I could see Felix was right. If there's a next world for pigs you'd have said the widow's pig was booked for it, and by an early thrain. The tears come into the widow's eyes as she looked at it.

"I may tell you, Mr. Murphy," sez Felix to me in a whisper, "it is my intention to offer the poor woman three pounds for the pig, and to forgive her all the meal she has had from me."

I near dhropped down dead.

"Well, in troth, Mr. O'Loan," sez I, "it's a kindly action, and I hope ye'll be rewarded as ye deserve."

"I hope so," sez Felix; "but I'm not thinkin' of reward. A poor woman, you know," sez he in his pompous way; "and a tenant, of course—a tenant."

Ye never seen anybody so pleased and thankful as the widow. If the tears was in her eyes before, they run down her cheeks now; and she blessed Felix fifty times.

"Not a word," sez Felix, "not a word. I'm always glad to do a kindness. Take this note with the pig to Mr. Harrington, my manager, and he'll give you three pounds. Are you stepping down the road, Mr. Murphy? I'm just taking a little constitutional walk before my dinner."

"Dinner!" thinks I to myself; and it five o'clock in the evenin'. But I thought the pomposity of him would amuse me, so I said I would walk a bit with him. Felix was no very quick mover, as I told ye; and before we had turned the corner from the widow's, lookin' back I could see her and the pig beltin' up the road next Ballygullion, for fear Felix might change his mind.

We hadn't gone more than a quarter of a mile along the road, me thryin' to pick Felix about his own pig, and him a deal too fly for me, when who should we meet but Billy Lenahan, comin' down from the Hills, likely to see me. He took a great look at

Felix as he come along, and then he beckoned to me.

"What is he afther?" sez he to me, noddin' his head towards Felix's back.

"He's just bought the widow's pig," sez I. "For three pounds."

"The cursed old ruffian!" sez Billy.

"Now, now, Billy!" sez I. "The man has done a charity for once in his life. Ye saw the state the pig was in."

"And do ye know what put it in that state?" sez Billy. "The damaged meal he's been sendin' it, to knock it out of the runnin' when he heard it might beat him for the Cup."

"Lord bless us, Billy," sez I, "who told ye that yarn?"

"Yarn be d—d," sez Billy; "it's as true as gospel. Didn't I get it from Harrington, the manager of the pawnshop? Him and me is very thick; and anyway he's made up his mind to leave Felix as soon as he can get another job. Now, don't say a word. He showed me what was left of the meal, and I tasted it. Two feeds of it would kill a he-ostrich. Tell me, is the pig delivered?"

"The widow's away up with it to Ballygullion ten minits ago," sez I.

"I might catch her yet," sez Billy. "Keep that old Judas Iscariot in crack for half an hour. I'll call up with you this evenin'." And away goes Billy as like a hare as a big stout man could manage and not burst.

I could hardly be civil to Felix afther what I'd heard about him, but I walked about half a mile up the road with him just to give Billy his chance, and then I took off home across the fields. I wasn't back twenty minits till Billy turned up. He was smilin' to himself as he come along.

"Ye were in time, then, Billy?" sez I.

"No," sez he. "Felix has got the pig."

"Well, what the divil are ye grinnin' about?" sez I.

"Never you mind, Pat," sez he.

And not another word could I get out of him about it, though I knowed well he was up to some rascality. The only thing he would say was not to back anybody's pig for the time bein'. He had looked in at Jones's on the way up, he told me, and thought he shaped like bein' a winner.

"Take this note with the pig to Mr. Harrington, my manager, and he'll give you three pounds."

And for my life I wasn't to say how Felix had got the widow's pig.

BUT he needn't have bothered about that, for, whoever told, before a week it was all over town and country. There was terrible indignation again Felix. Nobody would ha' grudged the Cup to the widow, but they'd all as soon seen the divil win as the pawnbroker, at any time; and then the dirty way he had gone about it stuck in their gizzards. If it hadn't been doin' well nobody would ha' bothered their heads, but word went round that from the day Felix got it the pig had begun to mend at a great rate, and was puttin' on weight like an aldherman. If there'd been as much blood in wee Jones the dhraper as would ha' raised the pressure he'd ha' burst a bloodvessel when he heard the news. He went round the whole town thryin' to raise a demonsthration again Felix; but there was too many owin' Felix money for anythin' to come of that. Then he tore away down to the widow to get her to go to law; but the widow took the thing in a very Christian spirit, and said that if Felix had done wrong it was betther to leave him to Providence. He would meet his reward, she said. But seein' he couldn't be sure it would happen before Cup day, that was little comfort to wee Jones.

What puzzled me was the way Billy Lenahan took it. He never turned a hair when I begun to jeer him, but just smiled very knowin', and said I was to put on no money yet.

"Look here, Billy," sez I, at the last; "that's all very well, but I want to know why. You're a very clever fellow; all the same I've knowed ye to make a mistake before now."

"Ye'll keep it to yourself if I tell ye?" sez he.

"Don't you know I will?" sez I. "There's not much good doin' the public benefactor with a straight tip."

"Well, then," sez he; "we can find out the weight of Jones's pig, can't we?"

"We can," sez I, "barrin' Jones loses the power of speech. Sure the very children in the sthreet knows it."

"And with the help of my friend Harrington we can find out the weight of Felix's, can't we?" sez he.

"But sure Felix'll know both weights, too," sez I; "and if he's not sure to win he'll not bet."

"I'll tell ye what he doesn't know," sez Billy, lookin' round very cautious. "He doesn't know that there's a fourteen-pound weight fastened below his pig's side of the weighbridge, and that he's countin' the pig that much heavier than it is."

"Well, upon my soul," sez I, afther I got back my breath, "you're a nice man to talk about honesty!"

"Isn't it good enough for him," sez Billy, "afther what he done on the widow? It's a charity to do it."

"It is," sez I; "but all the same I'm not sure that's why you're doin' it."

"Never you mind, now," sez he. "Will ye go halves in the bets?"

"I will," sez I, "if ye bet direct with Felix. I'm not goin' to rob an outsider over a trick. But hold on, Billy," sez I—for a thought struck me—"does he weigh the widow's pig on that weighbridge too?"

"He does not," sez Billy. "He has it down at his counthry seat, and I've less than no friends there; for the wife and family could eat me, over a few innccent remarks I made when they stepped into decent people's shoes down there."

"And what's your fourteen-pound weight good for," sez I, "when he may win with the widow's pig? I doubt there's lodgin's to let in that big head of yours."

"He won't win with the widow's pig," sez Billy.

"Why not?" sez I. "Isn't it doin' well?"

"It is," sez Billy, "terrible well. But he won't win with it."

And all I could do—and I thried him up and down—that was all I could get out of him, barrin' a kind of self-satisfied smile that near reconciled me to the thought of Felix bestin' him afther all.

And then daylight broke in on me like a May mornin'. I was standin' in the Ballygullion market when I heard that the widow's pig was dead! I didn't altogether believe it at first, for bettin' is bettin', an' Billy Lenahan wasn't the only smart fellow about Ballygullion; but I met Felix's yard man and he told me it was right enough. The pig was buried that very mornin' undher one of Felix's new appletrees.

"Don't you make me any the worse of it, Mr. Murphy," sez he; "for it's safer for a labourin' man to hold his tongue; but as sure as you're standin' there the pig was poisoned. I was lookin' out for it," sez he. "There was very bad feelin' again the boss over the buyin' of it. And divil's cure to him, too; for he got it by no fair play."

I never stayed my foot till I went up to Billy in the Hills; though, troth, I knowed it was no news I was bringin' him. But I couldn't trip him up. Ye never seen a man as surprised, and vexed even—by the way—in your life He cursed and swore, and questioned me all roads how it happened,

as if he was as innocent as a suckin' lamb, and I answered him back just as innocent; for I thought I'd be as clever as he was.

But at the last he calmed down.

"Well, well," sez he, "the widow's pig is dead, and there's no use me sinnin' my soul about it. Now it's between Felix and wee Jones; for I may tell you none of the rest of them have a chance. It's a fortnight to the show. Meet me there, and have a couple of pound in your pocket. Harrington'll keep me posted in the weights; and if Felix's pig is no heavier than wee Jones's and not above fourteen pounds lighter, you'll have more than two pound notes home with you."

The day of the show came, and from I was a boy I never seen as many people in Ballygullion fair-green at the one time before. Even the Widow Richardson was there, wherever she got the entrance-money. I couldn't blame her for wantin' to see who would win the Cup; for nobody else was a bit different. Horses, cattle, hens, ducks, butther, or eggs, nobody had a bit of intherest in them. The Armytage Cup for the heaviest pig might be the last item on the card, but it was the first in everybody's mind. Everybody was lookin' for good information, and everybody was dealin' out bad. A man of a changeable turn of mind might ha' bet all day and been nearly square on his book at the end of it.

But things has a way of clearin' themselves; and wearin' on in the afthernoon there was only the two men in the bettin', wee Jones and Felix O'Loan; with Felix easy favourite on account of all the money he was knowed to have on himself. I put nothin' on one way or another, waitin' for Billy. There was no sign of him, but I knowed he would turn up; for he'd sent me word to pay for the reserved end.

As the time dhrew near, even the reserved end was purty full. Felix was there, of course, as pompous as if he owned the place, but keepin' a sharp eye out for a possible bet; and wee Jones was waverin' through the crowd like a midge above a horse's head, thryin' to find out weights, and lookin' very twittery and nervous, but takin' an odd very bitther skelly, first at Felix, on account of his pig, and then at Felix's weemin-folk on account of all their swell clothes bein' bought in Belfast.

"As sure as you're standin' there, Mr. Murphy, the pig was poisoned."

The longest day comes to an end, and at last the ground was cleared and the big weighbridge wheeled out. You could have heard a pin dhrop when the judge came along, with his two weighers along with him. There was no pigs on the ground. By the rules every competin' man dhriv his pig into a shed beside the ring, and it was numbered there, and dhriv out by the show officials. In that way the judge could neither know who had enthered nor who owned any particular pig. But if he didn't, I may tell you everybody else did, for the features of every pig in the competition was as well known as the face of the town clock.

I was beginnin' to wonder about Billy, when I seen him not far away, colloguin' with Harrington. The next minit he pulled me by the sleeve.

"Gimme them two pound-notes," sez he, quietly.

" Are ye sure ye have the right information ? " sez I, as I handed them over.

" Jones's pig is three hundhredweight and eleven pounds," sez he, " and Felix's is three hundhredweight and five pounds—six pounds lighter than Jones's, and of course Felix thinks it's eight pounds heavier. Come on till we get him."

" Don't go straight to him, Billy," sez I. ' He'll maybe smell a rat if ye do."

But Billy knew a trick worth two of that. He walks past Felix towards where Tom Torrens the booky was standin', and as he went by he pulls four pound-notes out of his pocket and pretends to consider. Felix was on him like a shot.

" Are ye for layin' a thrifle, Mr. Lenahan ? " sez he.

" Aye, a wee bit," sez Billy.

" Well, if you're bettin' again me winnin' the Cup," sez Felix, " I'll take you."

" I was just goin' to back you," sez Billy, " for I fancy your chance. But I'm always a sport. If you'll lay me twenty pound to four on yourself I'll chance takin' ye. Pat Murphy here'll hold the stakes."

" Done ! " sez Felix, before the words was right out of Billy's mouth; and he covered the four one-pound notes with four fives. " Come along with me now to the stewards' enclosure, and we'll see this decided. I have the entry everywhere," sez he, swellin' out his chest.

Billy winked at me as we followed Felix in. But I never heeded him. I was puttin' two fives and two pound-notes into one pocket for myself, and the same in another pocket for Billy.

THERE wasn't much intherest in the first few pigs; but with every fresh one people got keener. For whoever numbered the pigs took care to grade them from small to big, as far as he could with his eye, just to keep the excitement risin'. A fine lot of pigs they were. all of them, but none anythin' near the weights Billy had mentioned. Every fresh pig come out he'd wink at me and tread on my foot, as much as to say " Wasn't I right ? " till he had my wee toe nearly in a jelly. Then out come Jones's pig. Everybody dhrew his breath, for they all knew the pig; and I took a fresh grip of the twelve pounds in my left-hand breeches-pocket.

" Three hundredweight and eleven and a half pounds," sez the judge; and up went a great cheer for the heaviest pig yet.

" Ye'll have bother beatin' that, Mr. O'Loan," sez Billy, grinnin' at him.

But Felix never turned a hair.

" This is my pig now," sez he. There wasn't a sound round the ring. Everybody craned forward.

" Three hundredweight and five pounds and a quarter," sez the judge.

Then there was the hullabaloo. Sticks and hats flew up all over the crowd from them that had backed Jones's pig. My own hat was half off my head till I minded that I was a stake-holder. But there was nothin' to hold back Billy. You'd ha' heard the screeches of him above thunder.

" I'm thinkin', Mr. O'Loan," sez he, when he'd got back his breath, " ye must have made a little miscalculation—and an expensive one for you, as it turns out."

But Felix was still quite cool.

" I don't often make a miscalculation," sez he. " I even took into account the fourteen-pound weight that was under my scale."

The smile left Billy's face like lightnin', and his jaw fell about a foot. But he pulled himself together near as quick.

" I know nothin' about your scale," sez he; " but your pig's beat, anyway."

" You seem," sez Felix, " to be makin' a little miscalculation yourself—and one that'll cost you money, I doubt. I don't know how it could have happened," he goes on, very bland, " but a false report got about that the pig I bought from Mrs. Richardson had died. This is it comin' out now."

I looked at the pig. Sure enough it was the widow's pig; for I seen the two black spots near its tail. And it was a good stone weightier than any pig on the ground, if I was any judge of pork.

I let go of the twenty-four pounds in my pockets, and turned on Billy.

" Ye big blundherin' jackass, ye ! " sez I, between my teeth.

But Billy wasn't listenin' to me. The two eyes was fair standin' in his head.

" Wait till I get Harrington," sez he, and away he charges through the crowd as if he was demented. I was just makin' to follow him, when Felix laid his hand on my arm.

" A minit, Mr. Murphy," sez he, very cool and smilin', " till this little matter of our bet is decided—and the money paid over."

I could have hit the old rascal; but there was nothing to do but face the music.

" Jones's pig may win yet," thinks I; but I knew it wouldn't. And I was right.

" Number twenty-eight," sez the judge; ' the last pig on the list—and the best. Three hundredweight and twenty-eight pounds. Bring me the list of names, Mr. Secretary."

Ye could ha' heard the grass growin' as the secretary handed over his book. Some

knew the pig, and some didn't; but them that did was too disgusted to speak.

"The owner of the winning pig is Mr. Felix O'Loan," sez the judge. And then the row riz—cheers, and yells, and boohs, and hisses. One or two sods of turf come along, too, though as bad luck would have it none of them hit Felix.

But people's throats isn't iron, and at last the noise died down.

Allow me to congratulate you Mr. O'Loan," sez the judge, layin' hold of the Cup. And just at that minit the Widow Richardson runs into the ring, with the bonnet hangin' over one eye, and her all out of breath. There was a yell from everybody round the ring.

"A minit, Mr. Murphy," sez he, "till this little matter of our bet is decided—and the money paid over."

"That's right, Mrs. Richardson," shouts one and another. "Claim the Cup! claim the Cup! It's yours by right. He cheated ye out of it!"

The secretary held up his hand for si'ence.

'Well, my good woman?" sez he.

"The winnin' pig is mine," sez the widow, gaspin'. 'I claim the Cup. Mr. O'Loan has no right to it, sir."

The secretary looked at Felix. But Felix wasn't put about. Twenty-five years in a pawnshop stood well to him.

"Rubbish," sez he. 'The pig is mine, as everybody knows. This woman sold it to me for three pounds, weeks ago."

"Did she?" sez the widow, all shakin' with excitement. "*Did* she? No, she didn't; for she got betther advice. But she *pawned* it with ye, for three pounds; and there's the ticket, signed by your manager, Mr. Harrington; and there's your three pounds and your intherest, and this is my pig—and my Cup!"

Ye should ha' been in Ballygullion that night. The wife tells me I was there.

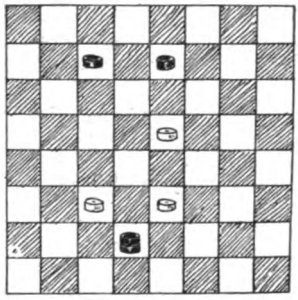
PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

763.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

HERE is another very easy draughts problem, just to encourage beginners. Any experienced player will solve it at a glance, but I am hoping to awaken the interest of the novice.

BLACK—3 pieces.



WHITE—3 pieces.

White to move and draw.

764.—A ROWING PUZZLE.

A CREW can row a certain course up stream in 8¾ minutes, and, if there were no stream, they could row it in 7 minutes less than it takes them to drift down the stream. How long would it take to row down with the stream?

765.—MISSING WORDS.

A MAN of . . . . . had caught a . . . . . ,
And it was windy weather.
" Give me my . . . . . ," he cried, " to fix
My fish and . . . . . together."

Each of the missing words contains the same five letters.

766.—SHEEP STEALING.

SOME sheep stealers made a raid and carried off a third of a flock of sheep and a third of a sheep. Another party stole a fourth of what remained and a fourth of a sheep. Then a third gang of raiders carried off a fifth of the remainder and three-fifths of a sheep, leaving 409 behind. What was the number of sheep in the full flock?

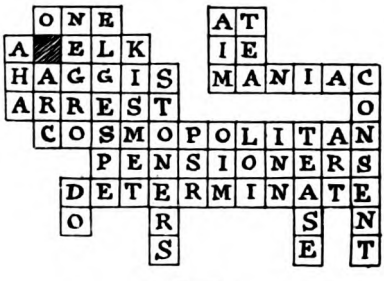
767.—FIND THE WORD.

A B C D E F * * * *

A WORD is known to contain all the first six letters of the alphabet and four other letters, indicated by the asterisks. Can you discover the word? The four unknown letters are all different from one another and do not repeat any of the six known letters.

SOLUTIONS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLES.

757.—THE BRITISH LION.

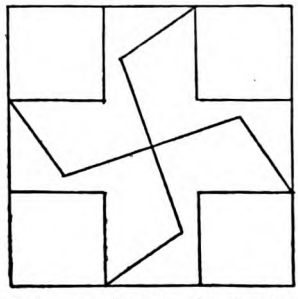


758.—DE MORGAN AND ANOTHER.

DE MORGAN was born in 1806. When he was 43, the year was the square of his age—1849. Jenkins was born in 1860. He was $5^2 + 6^2$ (61) in the year $5^4 + 6^4$ (1921). Also he was 2×31 (62) in the year 2×31^2 (1922). Again he was 3×5 (15) in the year 3×5^4 (1875).

759.—THE DONJON KEEP WINDOW.

THE illustration will show how the square window may be divided into eight lights " whose sides are all equal." Every side of the panes is of the same length. It was understood (though not actually stated) that the lights should be all of the same area, but the four irregular lights are each one-quarter larger than the square lights. And neither the shape nor the number of sides of the lights are equal. Yet the solution strictly complies with the conditions, as given. If you shut out all these tricks and quibbles in a puzzle



you spoil it by overloading the conditions. It is better (except in the case of competitions) to leave certain things to be understood.

760.—THE TWO DIGITS.

MY two solutions are as follows: $25=5^2$ and $36=6 \times \underline{13}$.

761.—MISSING WORDS.

THE words, in their order, are, DRAWER, WARRED, REWARD, WARDER.

762.—A CHESS ENDING.

WHITE plays 1. B—Q2, 2. B—R5, 3. P—Kt.4, and whatever Black may do White is stalemated and the game is drawn.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO FALL ONE THOUSAND FEET

BY

Staff-Sergeant Randle L. Bose, U.S.A.

IT all happened in eleven seconds, but there were enough thrills for eleven years. I never dreamed the adventure was going to be such wild excitement, although I did know that my nerves were in for a try-out when Major Hensley, commanding officer at Mitchel Field, called me over and said to me :—

"Look here, Bose, what do you think about it? You know the old story that if a man jumped off the Woolworth Building he would be unconscious before he hit the ground?"

I had heard that common opinion many times and had no difficulty in guessing what the Major was about. He had got into a discussion with another officer about the effect of a long fall through the air upon a man's faculties; and when the Major's mind gets to working on an aeronautical problem it is apt to help pure reason along with a try-it-out principle. So I felt it was up to me to say :—

"I'll try it."

That meant that I would jump out of a 'plane and see how far I could fall without opening my parachute. Not the pleasantest little trick, but I have been a parachute jumper for a few years now and have got along comfortably in the Army by being ready to volunteer for any stunt.

"All right, Bose," replied the Major; "how about Sunday?"

"Sunday is fine," I said, and that was all there was to it—until Sunday.

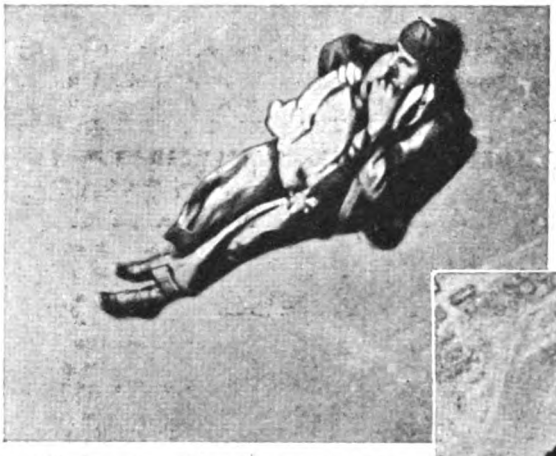
However, I did a lot of thinking, and the more I thought the more interesting the problem became.

The experiment had a very instant military importance. It was common enough during the war for an aeroplane to shoot fire shells into a captive balloon and set it aflame, and then to take shots at the observers, who, having jumped, were descending slowly in parachutes.

Now, at the present time, the parachute has developed so far that in most cases of trouble in the air the flyers can jump out to safety, and in air fighting hereafter it will be largely a matter of a 'plane being cracked up structurally or set aflame by hostile fire and of the aviators taking to their parachutes. If they have to descend slowly and helplessly, the easiest of targets, enemy 'planes will scout around and kill them as they hang. It is more trouble to train pilots and observers than to build 'planes. But if the escaping flyer can fall several thousand feet and then open his parachute he will, when he is over his own lines, usually escape.

Sergeant Bose adjusting his harness preparatory to his sensational drop from the clouds.

What practical experience there had been was that of an Army officer down in Texas who held the record for the longest fall made till then—a drop of five hundred feet. He jumped from a flaming 'plane and fell that distance before he could get his parachute open. He reported that he was on the verge of unconsciousness when his fall was checked. His testimony, though, was minimized by his own statement that in his jump from the blazing 'plane and fall



These extraordinary photographs were taken from an aeroplane—

above the falling man. If you place the magazine on a table and—

through the air he was so frightened that he could not remember the sensations he had during the drop, save that of fear—only he was certain that he could not have remained conscious any longer.

I myself had had no significant experience. I had made more than a hundred parachute jumps, but had always got my parachute open quite promptly. However, I had a feeling that I should keep conscious in the longest kind of fall. But when I thought it over the thought came strongly that I didn't know. I had set out to prove a hypothesis, not with pencil and paper, but with my own bones. My orders were that the moment I felt my senses going I should pull the cord on my right shoulder that released the parachute. But suppose that consciousness snapped out suddenly? Well, that was a chance I should have to take.

The more immediate danger was the jerk that I should get when the parachute opened. I was determined to make a drop of more than a thousand feet, and my fall would suddenly be checked by the straps around my body. If the speed of the fall were great enough, that might kill a man or hurt him badly, or knock him out. If it were to jar me unconscious it would be serious. You have to control a parachute. By pulling it down at the sides you can guide it and keep from hitting a tree or a high building and getting a nasty fall, and you can keep it from oscillating, else you will come down swinging crazily and be dashed against the ground.

Sunday came, an ideal day. The warm spring sun was bright, and a light five-mile wind was blowing. Everybody was on the field to watch the performance. Lieutenant Whitley, who flew the 'plane, and I made our arrangements.

When we were up three thousand feet he was to circle and pass twice over the headquarters building. That would be the signal. He would cut off the motor and glide. There were two reasons for this. First, it would cut down the speed of the 'plane from ninety to about fifty miles an hour. The motion of the 'plane forward hurls you and adds to the velocity of your start. Secondly, it is bad to jump with the motor going. The wash of the propeller, like a tremendous gale, will set you spinning. This is bad for even an ordinary parachute jump. There is something of a jar when the parachute opens, no matter how little a distance you fall, and it is best to take it falling feet downward, so that the jar is distributed between the straps around the legs and those around the shoulders.

Ordinarily you can contrive to fall feet downward, although, of course, you always tend to go over head first. You control your position in the air as a diver does, by using your head and shoulders as a rudder. If you get a bad initial somersaulting spin you may not be able to straighten up and will have to take the full jar on the shoulder straps, which will give you a severe shaking.

The motor thundered and the big bombing 'plane hurled itself across the field and then began to glide upward. I smoked a cigarette and wandered around a bit in the cabin. In an incredibly short space of time, it seemed, the earth was far below us. I fingered the straps of my parachute, the cord I should have to pull to open it, the

strands of silk packed on my back. I certainly should need that old spread of canvas. I wondered whether she would really open when I pulled the string. If she didn't—but of course she would. She had always opened for me, with never a hitch. I wondered if the silk would stand the terrific strain when I opened her up, or whether it would shatter into ribbons and let me go shooting down. I hadn't worried about that at all until now, I had been so perfectly certain that the silk would stand the strain of a five-thousand-foot drop. But now everything worried me.

But I hadn't much more time for thinking. The jump was at hand.

We had passed for the first time over the headquarters building. I got into position. I was to drop through the bomb chute in the middle of the cabin. I walked back and took a look down through the three-foot square hole. The earth was so far away through the opening! Across the hole, along the length of the ship, was a rod. I walked out on to it, holding myself on the bomb racks above. Then I lowered myself and sat on the rod.

There was the field below, with a lot of cars parked in a row. We were passing over the farther buildings. Yes, there was the headquarters building.

It seemed like a blow as the roar of the motor stopped suddenly. Everything was very still.

look down on them you will obtain a vivid idea of—

The Lieutenant's voice came shouting, asking me whether I was all right. I shouted "Yes."

The 'plane was gliding. I waited until I judged the headquarters building was directly below. That was the time for me to jump. I let myself down slowly. Now I was hanging by my hands.

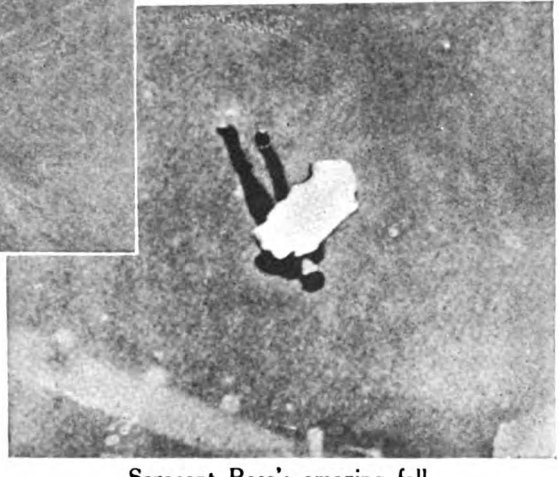
I let go.

My fingers had scarcely loosened when there was a bang that seemed to me like a cannon, and instantly I was hit as if by a violent blow. The pilot had miscalculated a little and glided too far. He hadn't been able to see me, and, supposing that I had jumped a second or two before, he had given her the gun. The motor had abruptly swung the propeller into action and the sudden tremendous wind had caught me full.

I felt myself whirling like a pinwheel. Over and over I went at a tremendous rate, and all the while falling. It seemed that for a long while I struggled desperately, but I had fallen only a few hundred feet before I managed to straighten out and get feet downward. God, how relieved I was! I didn't want to take that frightful jerk coming on my shoulders.

And now I had a few seconds in which to observe my sensations. The earth seemed rushing up to meet me at a crazy rate. There coming up at me was the crowd on the field, men in uniforms and civilians, all with their faces up. I was in an enormous wind, rushing straight from the ground, a most prodigious wind that seemed hard and vengefully unrelenting. In my ears there was a loud whistling, the whistling of that wind. I was careful to note that I felt perfectly well. I felt no distress at the pressure, and while for safety I held my breath, as I had planned to do throughout the fall, I felt certain that I could have breathed all right.

A thrill of joy caught hold of me. A man could fall off three Woolworth



Sergeant Bose's amazing fall.

Photos: International.

Buildings piled end on end and be perfectly conscious when he hit the ground. I was knocking out one of the most prevalent of popular notions. I began to be contemptuous over the ease of this drop. I only began.

It seemed like a terrific crash. I had never received such a blow. For a year or two I was a bantam-weight champion in the Navy, and I took many a right-hander and left-hander. Then I was a professional boxer for a while, until I was knocked out by a little fellow down in Richmond who had knocked out Kid Williams, the former bantam-weight champion. It came in the fourth round. Five times he knocked me down with smashes to the short ribs, and the fifth time I stayed down after a punch the like of which I never expected to dream of, much less feel again.

But the wallop I got about the fifth second of that drop exceeded all others.

I had hit an air pocket, a layer of wind probably blowing up at a slant. I had crashed into it with a shock that can be appreciated only by one who has felt an aeroplane hit a wind pocket.

I was spinning, spinning like a top. It had set me going like a flywheel, head over heels, at a most tremendous rate.

The thought came of taking the parachute jar while revolving thus and dropping at an astounding rate. I would never do that, and I struggled crazily. No use.

I tried to right myself, but couldn't get my body under control. I continued to try. I should have to stop spinning some time. Before I hit the ground, I hoped. But I knew I could stop spinning long before I fell the two thousand five hundred feet to the ground.

But now I realized, with a ghastly feeling, that my senses were beginning to go.

It wasn't the pressure. It was the spinning. I was very dizzy, and I was getting dizzier. My mind began to blur. I didn't want to take the jerk on my shoulders, but neither did I want to take a chance of going unconscious for the spinning.

For seconds that seemed an age I was poised between the two evils.

A decision had to come, and it came when I felt my mind rapidly getting blank. A pang of desperate fear shot through me. My hand went to my shoulder. I tried, and felt with a sickening sensation that I could not control my body in the slightest.

My fingers were around the cord on my shoulder.

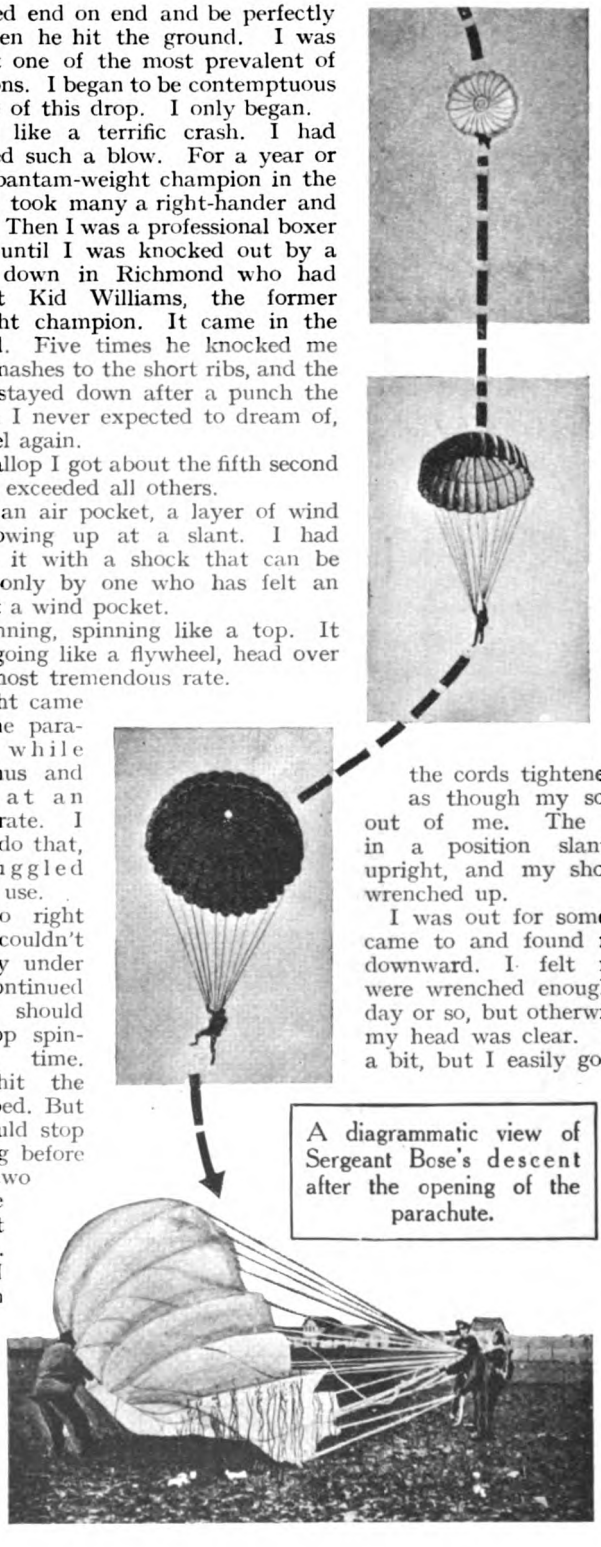
A convulsive pull.

A terrific crack as the cords tightened suddenly, and I felt as though my soul were being jerked out of me. The opening caught me in a position slanting somewhat from upright, and my shoulders were violently wrenched up.

I was out for some seconds, and then I came to and found myself floating gently downward. I felt my shoulders. They were wrenched enough to lay me up for a day or so, but otherwise I was all right, and my head was clear. I was swinging quite a bit, but I easily got the parachute under control and made a good landing.

A week or so later I went up again and tried a longer drop. This time it was no thrill at all. I knew exactly what I was up against and I encountered no mishaps.

I fell fifteen hundred feet before my parachute opened, and then went to a cinematograph show to get a little excitement.



A diagrammatic view of Sergeant Bose's descent after the opening of the parachute.

The Confusion of Mr Sackbut and Mr Denshaw

by

CATHERINE WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

MR. SACKBUT had forty-five years, a pleasant country house of a size that did not strain his comfortable means, an amiable wife and appropriate children, drank a glass of light wine at dinner and smoked a cigar afterwards, and was generally given to moderation in all things.

So far, so very good; but, to remind Mr. Sackbut that he was not yet in Paradise but only a tenant in a vale of tears, there was just one thing in his life that refused to be moderate. It was a subject of anxiety to him that was naturally reflected in the home life of the whole Sackbut family. It developed peculiarities that puzzled the uninitiated visitor; there was a scarcity of potatoes at meals and it was difficult to get a second piece of bread—it seemed always rather out of reach; there was a notable absence of those appetizing little things in silver dishes to nibble at between courses that distinguish the dinner-tables of the well-to-do, and there was an amount of bustle and urgency to outdoor exercise that seemed excessive to some. But indeed these idiosyncrasies were designed not to harass the visitor but to abate the subject of anxiety—the waist measure of Mr. Sackbut.

It persistently exceeded moderation. Doctors, called in for Mr. Sackbut's sprained shoulder or his chest cold, noticed it. One exalted specialist tapped it brusquely and called it a rude name and wanted to put it into a sort of corset. They all proposed to diminish it by tiresome and uncomfortable devices. It had to be kept within bounds by constant attention, by disagreeable dieting, by painful abstinence, by physical exercises—oh, how boring they were! Mr. Sackbut was one of those men who like their letters and their cup of tea and a newspaper brought at eight in the morning, so that a delicious three-quarters of an hour may be spent reading or dozing before a hasty bath and violent dressing brings them downstairs not too late to catch the bacon and eggs crisp and fresh. Out of which delightful piece of time somebody with a foreign name whom Mr. Sackbut had never seen stretched out a remote hand and plucked unto himself for the horrid rites of his worship twenty precious minutes, expecting Mr. Sackbut to spend them on his back foolishly kicking his legs in the air, or with his feet pinned under the chest of drawers, lifting his ample body from the floor and laying it back again in aimless reiteration, or, worst of all, clutching a chair-back and oscillating his abdomen violently from side to side. All of which Mr. Sackbut did for an exact twenty minutes the first day after prescription, repeated for a shorter time for the better part of a fortnight except for a day or two here and there when he got up too late and had to

hurry, and then forgot about altogether. And all these things did not noticeably diminish the waist measure; they did but keep it as it were in leash, ready to break out and exuberate beyond all decorum directly Mr. Sackbut gave up the struggle and abandoned himself to his manifest destiny.

One of the moves in his duel with the waist measure was to get his neighbour, Mr. Denshaw, to come over and play singles at tennis. Mr. Denshaw was tall and thin and not over robust: he was prone to attacks of influenza in season—and nowadays influenza is always in season—and he had none of the bounce and buoyancy of Mr. Sackbut. But he liked playing tennis, and he had a side-long swipe down his opponent's left that Mr. Sackbut never did and never would learn to expect, that equalized his game with his neighbour's busy energy about the court. They each installed the telephone mainly for the convenience of ringing one another up and proposing a match.

The opening of the season was a notable event.

"Hullo, Denshaw!" called Mr. Sackbut on the first sunny day in April.

"That's you, Sackbut, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's me. Can you come over for some tennis? The court's been cut and marked out, and it looks dry enough."

"Right-ho, my lad!"

And soon afterwards Mr. Denshaw appeared in his two-seater coming up the drive. As he feared the treachery of the spring breeze after his latest influenza, he wore tweeds, and brought his flannels in a bag to change into for the game.

"Capital!" said Mr. Sackbut. "You can go and change up in my dressing-room."

And Mr. Denshaw did.

They had a very enjoyable game. Mr. Sackbut's favourite service was erratic with disuse, and Mr. Denshaw's swipe mostly went into the net, but in the second set they made 6 all, 7 all, 8 all, and then Mr. Denshaw's post-influenza fatigue asserted itself and Mr. Sackbut won at 10–8. By unspoken consent they then slackened the net.

"That's the way to keep fit," said Mr. Sackbut, mopping his brow as they walked back to the house. "Open the pores and sweat. I'll have a rub down before tea. You'd better, too, with that cold of yours."

"I guess I had," said Mr. Denshaw, though indeed he was of a dry habit and did not deliquesce at games like Mr. Sackbut. They parted on the landing upstairs, and Mr. Sackbut went into the bathroom and splashed while Mr. Denshaw had a rough towel in Mr. Sackbut's dressing-room and changed back into his tweeds. He was ready before Mr. Sackbut reappeared, so he went downstairs and entered into an agreeable conversation with Mrs. Sackbut at the tea-table about the egg-laying averages of Speckled Sussex and Wyandottes and heavy fowls generally.

MR. SACKBUT lay in his bath and soaked blissfully in hot water. He knew he oughtn't, but it was so overwhelmingly nice.

A parlourmaid, who was in love with the young postman and whose affair was not going particularly well, came upstairs to tidy Mr. Sackbut's dressing-room, picked up the abandoned white trousers of Mr. Denshaw, folded them expertly, and put them away in the chest of drawers.

Mr. Sackbut pulled himself out of the hot water at last with a sigh, dried and rubbed himself a beautiful cherry pink, got into his dressing-gown, gathered up his flannels, paddled over to his dressing-room and dropped them on a chair, and put on a nice grey suit with a faint heliotrope line in it that he particularly fancied. Then he, too, came downstairs.

"Ugh!" he said cheerfully, at the sight of the spread table. "All the things I like best and mustn't eat. What are you going to have, Denshaw? Sandwiches? Here you are, Gentleman's Relish—cress—which? Oh, I forgot. *You* can have both, you lucky beggar."

"Still banting, then?" said Mr. Denshaw, helping himself daintily but liberally.

"Rather, my boy. Tea's the enemy. Solid carbohydrates, all of it. I've found out it doesn't matter what else you do about food if you keep off the stuff at tea."

'Don't you think he's looking *much* better?" said Mrs. Sackbut. It was a kind touch that she never referred to Mr. Sackbut's waist measure except indirectly as "he."

"Looking remarkably fit, I should say," said Mr. Denshaw. "Is that your renowned apple jelly? Thank you."

"Tea's the trap," went on Mr. Sackbut, sipping at his milkless cup. "'Keep off the tea, my lad,' I'd say to any young chap of thirty-five setting up a home. Annie there goes and puts out the most seductive little cakes all over the place——"

"Oh, George, I don't. The plainest things——"

"Oh, yes, you do—hot cakes, buttered cakes, sugared cakes, cakes that squelch cream into you when you bite 'em. You'll get me as round as a billiard-ball, and then you'll try to get me a—what is it? That flattened thing—oblate spheroid."

"Oh, I *forgot*," cried Mrs. Sackbut.

"Not another cake, is there?" inquired Mr. Sackbut.

The parlourmaid placed the biscuits in front of Mr. Sackbut and withdrew. "You can eat those," said Mrs. Sackbut. "They've got no starch in them, none whatever."

'No-o. Oh, you goose, George! But Mary forgets everything nowadays. Would you ring, George? Oh, thank you, Mr. Denshaw."

The absent-minded parlourmaid appeared. Mrs. Sackbut kept her waiting for the fraction of a second. Discipline.

"The *biscuits*, Mary," she then said very seriously.

Pause. 'Didn't I tell you?" said Mr. Sackbut weakly to Mr. Denshaw, but there was felt to be more in it than that.

The absent-minded parlourmaid returned, stepping softly and bearing a plateful of thin square dry biscuits of a curious buttercup colour. She placed them exactly in front of Mr. Sackbut and withdrew.

"*Well?*" said Mr. Sackbut.

"You can eat those," said Mrs. Sackbut.

'The devil I can," said Mr. Sackbut, lifting one to the tip of his nose and jibbing slightly. "Why?"

"Don't you remember Mr. Pritchard telling us about his sister's biscuits? She

eats them always, and is *so* much better. So afterwards I asked him to write down their name and address for me, and I got a box by post. They've got no starch in them, none whatever."

She was so triumphant and tenderly solicitous that Mr. Sackbut bit off a mouthful of the biscuit he held. "I never knew starch was so nice," was all he said. Then with a happy thought he lifted the plate. "Try one, Denshaw," he said with a return to cheerfulness.

Mr. Denshaw hesitated, and then, being a person of meticulous courtesy, took one.

"*I* had one when they first came," said Mrs. Sackbut, encouragingly.

"Not bad," said Mr. Denshaw, bravely.

"And what are these supposed to do for me?" asked Mr. Sackbut irascibly, at the end of his biscuit.

"It's what they *don't* do," said Mrs. Sackbut with a little giggle.

Mr. Denshaw, as if inadvertently, wiped up the remainder of his apple jelly with his knife and heaped it on the end of his biscuit.

"I believe they'd be excellent with cheese," he said, in a way that betrayed much about what he thought of them unadorned.

"I *hoped* you'd like them," said Mrs. Sackbut in a relieved tone. "They do solve the problem of tea."

"They abolish it," said Mr. Sackbut, dryly.

And indeed they seemed to do so, for neither gentleman partook further. Presently Mr. Denshaw went upstairs to Mr. Sackbut's dressing-room, threw the white trousers he found there into his bag, and departed.

THE following days were stormy and cold in the April manner, and it was not until a week later that Mr. Sackbut could challenge Mr. Denshaw again.

"Hullo, Denshaw! How are you?" he called into the telephone.

"Better, thanks—all right, I should say."

"Not been seedy?"

"Just a touch of 'flu back again, I fancy—a couple of days ago. It's gone now."

"Well, how about some tennis? Feel up to it?"

"Oh, yes. I'll come along."

Mr. Sackbut hung up the receiver and went upstairs to change. He pulled out of his chest of drawers the white flannel trousers so carefully laid away there by his parlour-maid a week before. He put them on. He tried to button them round his waist. He held his breath, and fastened the top button with a wrench. Then, relaxing for abdominal respiration, the button flew, and hit the long mirror on the wall with a sharp ping.

Mr. Sackbut looked alarmed. He got slowly out of the trousers, laid them down thoughtfully, and put on a new pair that he had recently bought in anticipation of the tennis season.

He went downstairs and looked for his wife. She was at the telephone. "Not at all a nice piece," she was saying. "All fat and bone. Yes, fat. And tough, too. . . . Well, I hope it won't be."

She hung up the telephone.

"Annie," said Mr. Sackbut, sitting down beside her and looking extremely serious, "am I getting stouter?"

"*No*," said Mrs. Sackbut readily. "You shouldn't worry yourself about it so much; really you shouldn't."

"But just now I put on—I suppose it was one of my last year's pairs of white trousers, and they wouldn't fasten."

"Wouldn't *fasten?*"

"No, not nearly. When I pulled them together the button flew off. Do I *look* fatter than last year?"

"Not a bit."

"But I must be. Much."

"I don't think you are for a minute."

"But it shows I am, doesn't it?"

"You haven't been eating those biscuits I got for you."

Mr. Sackbut moaned slightly. Then he looked sorry. "Give me one now," he said.

"I don't think they are any good that way," said Mrs. Sackbut, dubiously.

Mr. Denshaw's car came purring up the drive. He was already in tennis flannels, and the two friends proceeded to the court. Mr. Denshaw took off his coat and revealed a very new, very ochreish leather belt about his middle. He gave it a hitch, and Mr. Sackbut noticed it.

"Got it coming along," said Mr Denshaw. "Only sort old Bates keeps in his shop. Beastly colour, isn't it?"

"I don't remember seeing you wear a belt before," said Mr. Sackbut.

"I don't usually. But to-day—simply couldn't keep 'em up. Loose as anything. This influenza is the very deuce for running one down. I should never have believed I could have lost flesh like I have."

"You'll have to feed up a bit," said Mr. Sackbut.

"Rather," said Mr. Denshaw. "I don't like it. Too sudden altogether."

Mr. Sackbut looked concernedly at his friend. They began to play.

At tea Mr. Sackbut pressed Mr. Denshaw with every dainty on the table. "Cream's a good thing," he said to him.

"Whatever's the matter with Mr. Denshaw, then?" asked Mrs. Sackbut.

"I don't remember seeing you wear a belt before," said Mr. Sackbut.
"I don't usually. But to-day—simply couldn't keep 'em up. Loose as anything."

They explained his alarming shrinkage. "You should take Malt and Oil Emulsion, Mr. Denshaw," said Mrs. Sackbut. "Now, do promise me to get a bottle as you go home. It's not so nasty as it sounds, and you'll soon get to like it."

Mr. Denshaw, who was evidently really perturbed about his strange waste of substance, promised he would.

And don't you touch these biscuits, my lad," said Mr. Sackbut, tucking in heartily at the gamboge squares. "They'll bant you off the earth."

"I had that one last week," said Mr. Denshaw.

"It couldn't have been that," said Mrs. Sackbut.

"I wish you'd let me have a dose of that

'flu of yours," said Mr. Sackbut, "next time you've got some to spare. That'd be the medicine for me."

"There's nothing the matter with you, is there?" said Mr. Denshaw.

"He thinks he's getting stouter," said Mrs. Sackbut, "and I'm sure he's not."

"*Thinks*," said Mr. Sackbut. "There isn't much thinks about it when I put on a pair of last year's whites to-day and couldn't button 'em."

"Now listen, George," said Mrs. Sackbut, getting up and going over to her little writing desk. "I know now just what the reason of that was, and while you were at tennis I wrote this letter to the laundry. I think it's perfectly shameful of them, but I want you to tell me if I've said too much." She came back with a letter, and proceeded to read it gravely and weightily.

"'*To the Manager of the Lilywhite Hand Laundry.*'"

"Hand laundry!" said Mr. Sackbut, *sotto voce*. "Tooth and claw laundry, I call it. Look at my collars."

"'*Sir,*

"'*I regret to inform you that you have totally ruined a pair of Mr. Sackbut's white flannel trousers by shrinking them so much that he cannot get them on. I regret this still more as I have had to make several very serious complaints lately*—(" They scorched one of the maid's aprons last week and lost a handkerchief of mine only two months ago," said Mrs. Sackbut in an aside)—*and I must ask you what compensation you propose to offer me for this wholesale destruction of my property*—(" Not wholesale, Annie, surely?" put in Mr. Sackbut)—*and whether in the future there is any prospect of your changing your present totally incompetent staff for workers who have some knowledge of the proper way to do their work instead of simply ruining everything they lay their hands on*——'

"I don't like that last sentence quite," finished Mrs. Sackbut.

"But do you really think they shrank them?" said Mr. Sackbut, with a gleam of happiness coming back into his expression.

"Of course they did!" said Mrs. Sackbut, in a convincing and most comforting manner.

"Perhaps they stretched mine," said Mr. Denshaw, feeling out after consolation too.

"It's better to have them dry-cleaned really," said Mrs. Sackbut, in her wisest voice. "Even if it does cost more at the time, I'm sure it's a saving in the end."

"Save the ounces, and the pounds will look after themselves," said Mr. Sackbut, absently picking up a cream éclair.

"George, what *are* you doing?"

"Just this one for luck," said Mr. Sackbut, biting it.

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirtieth series of acrostics begins with No. 145, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 145.

OUR hero sat upon a wall,
Our hero had a mighty fall,
And all the royal steeds and men
Could not restore our hero then.

1. 'Tis on your shoulders, and on mine,
   The word is seen in later line.
2. A tail, folk waiting in a row,
   Here neither tail nor head must show.
3. Musical note, or drop, we name;
   Read either way, it is the same.
4. Machine hydraulic here we view;
   Equally well, a dancing shoe.
5. It shades from sun, it shields from rain;
   One letter change, a coin is plain.
6. Occurring every year, we see
   Within a man of high degree.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 145 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on August 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 144.

1. H	epati	C
2. A	niell	O
3. R	andal	L
4. L	oupgaro	U
5. E	ncomiu	M
6. Q	ue	B
7. U	l	I
8. I	xio	N
9. N	ewcastl	E

NOTES.—Light 1. The pica; the hepatic line, in palmistry. 2. Masaniello, properly Tommaso Aniello. 3. Randall Davidson; Rall., musical abbreviation—and. 4. Longfellow, Evangeline, part the first. 5. The derivation. 6. Usquebaugh, U.S.A., ugh. 7. Bethulia. The Apocrypha, Judith. 8. King of Thessaly, Greek mythology. Perpetual motion. 9. One word, two words; rook, castle, in chess.

"Surf" and "serf" are both considered correct answers to the first light of No. 142; the couplet can be read to fit either word.

SEP 8 1925

e Purification of
dney Spelvin" By P. G. WODEHOUSE

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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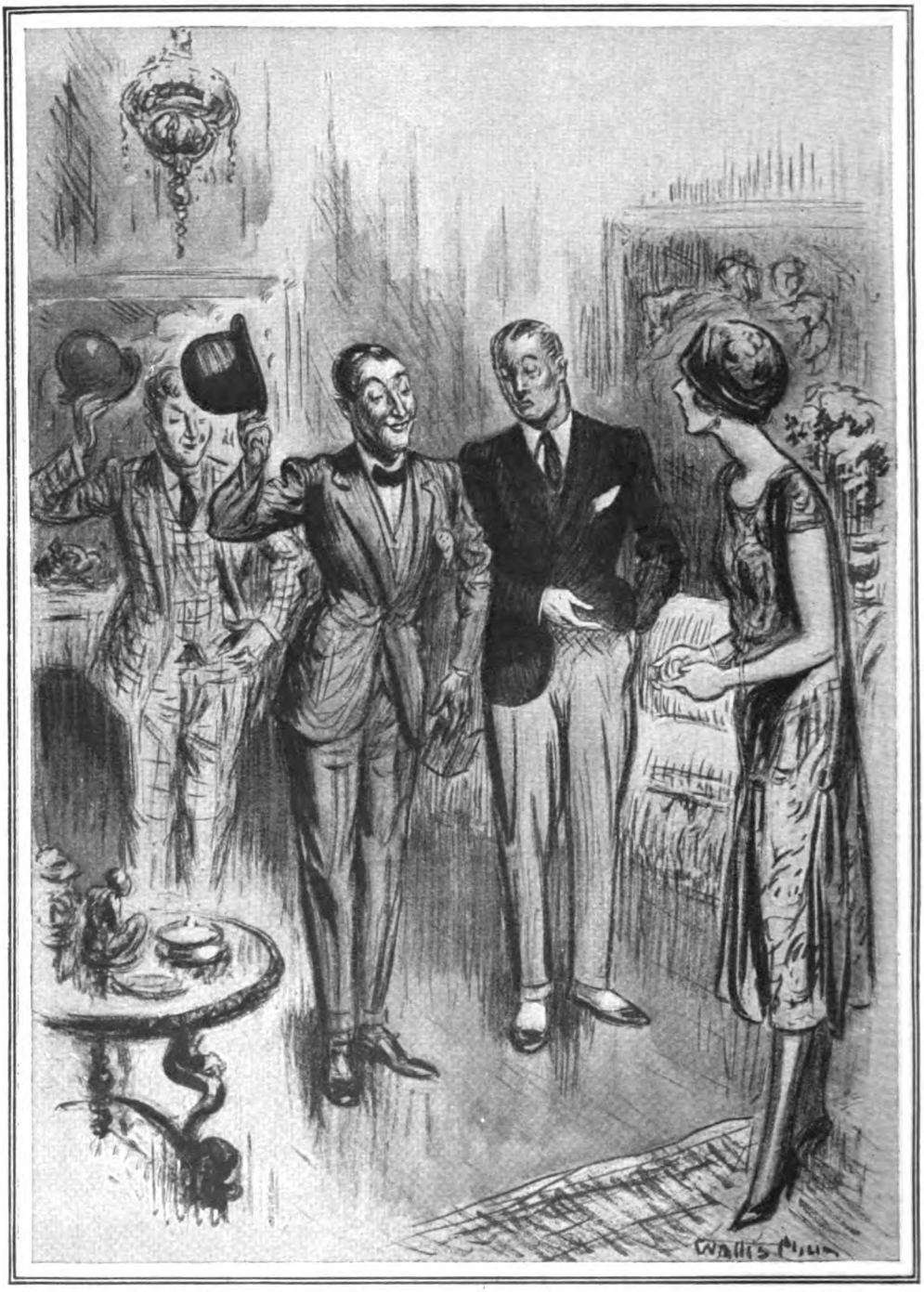

"MR. REGINALD BROWN AND MR. CYRIL DELANCEY—MY WIFE," SAID WILLIAM, CURTLY. THE TWO MEN BOWED SLIGHTLY AND RAISED THEIR BOWLER HATS. "THEY ARE DETECTIVES," SAID WILLIAM.

(See page 222.)

The Purification of Rodney Spelvin

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

IT was an afternoon on which one would have said that all Nature smiled. The air was soft and balmy; the links, fresh from the rains of spring, glistened in the pleasant sunshine; and down on the second tee young Clifford Wimple, in a new suit of plus-fours, had just sunk two balls in the lake and was about to sink a third. No element, in short, was lacking that might be supposed to make for quiet happiness.

And yet on the forehead of the Oldest Member, as he sat beneath the chestnut tree on the terrace overlooking the ninth green, there was a peevish frown; and his eye, gazing down at the rolling expanse of turf, lacked its customary genial benevolence. His favourite chair, consecrated to his private and personal use by unwritten law, had been occupied by another. That is the worst of a free country—liberty so often degenerates into licence.

The Oldest Member coughed.

"I trust," he said, "you find that chair comfortable?"

The intruder, who was the club's hitherto spotless secretary, glanced up in a goofy manner.

"Eh?"

"That chair—you find it fits snugly to the figure?"

"Chair? Figure? Oh, you mean this chair? Oh, yes."

"I am gratified and relieved," said the Oldest Member.

There was a silence.

"Look here," said the secretary, "what would you do in a case like this? You know I'm engaged?"

"I do. And no doubt your *fiancée* is missing you. Why not go in search of her?"

"She's the sweetest girl on earth."

"I should lose no time."

"But jealous. And just now I was in my office, and that Mrs. Pettigrew came in to ask if there was any news of the purse which she lost a couple of days ago. It had just been brought to my office, so I produced it; whereupon the infernal woman, in a most unsuitably girlish manner, flung her arms round my neck and kissed me on my bald spot. And at that moment Adela came in. Death," said the secretary, "where is thy sting?"

The Oldest Member's pique melted. He had a feeling heart.

"Most unfortunate. What did you say?"

"I hadn't time to say anything. She shot out too quick."

The Oldest Member clicked his tongue sympathetically.

"These misunderstandings between young and ardent hearts are very frequent," he said. "I could tell you at least fifty cases of the same kind. The one which I will select is the story of Jane Packard, William Bates, and Rodney Spelvin."

"You told me that the other day. Jane Packard got engaged to Rodney Spelvin, the poet, but the madness passed and she married William Bates, who was a golfer."

"This is another story of the trio."

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" You told me that one, too. After Jane Packard married William Bates she fell once more under the spell of Spelvin, but repented in time."

" This is still another story. Making three in all."

The secretary buried his face in his hands.

" Oh, well," he said, " go ahead. What does anything matter now ? "

" First," said the Oldest Member, " let us make ourselves comfortable. Take this chair. It is easier than the one in which you are sitting."

" No, thanks."

" I insist."

" Oh, all right."

" Woof ! " said the Oldest Member, settling himself luxuriously.

With an eye now full of kindly good-will, he watched young Clifford Wimple play his fourth. Then, as the silver drops flashed up into the sun, he nodded approvingly and began.

THE story which I am about to relate (said the Oldest Member) begins at a time when Jane and William had been married some seven years. Jane's handicap was eleven, William's twelve, and their little son, Braid Vardon, had just celebrated his sixth birthday.

Ever since that dreadful time, two years before, when, lured by the glamour of Rodney Spelvin, she had taken a studio in the artistic quarter, dropped her golf, and practically learned to play the ukelele, Jane had been unremitting in her efforts to be a good mother and to bring up her son on the strictest principles. And, in order that his growing mind might have every chance, she had invited William's younger sister, Anastatia, to spend a week or two with them and put the child right on the true functions of the mashie. For Anastatia had reached the semi-finals of the last Ladies' Open Championship and, unlike many excellent players, had the knack of teaching.

On the evening on which this story opens the two women were sitting in the drawing-room, chatting. They had finished tea ; and Anastatia, with the aid of a lump of sugar, a spoon, and some crumbled cake, was illustrating the method by which she had got out of the rough on the fifth at Squashy Hollow.

" You're wonderful ! " said Jane, admiringly. "And such a good influence for Braid ! You'll give him his lesson tomorrow afternoon as usual ? "

" I shall have to make it the morning," said Anastatia. " I've promised to meet a man in town in the afternoon."

As she spoke there came into her face a look so soft and dreamy that it roused Jane as if a bradawl had been driven into her leg. As her history has already shown, there was a strong streak of romance in Jane Bates.

" Who is he ? " she asked, excitedly.

" A man I met last summer," said Anastatia.

And she sighed with such abandon that Jane could no longer hold in check her womanly nosiness.

" Do you love him ? " she cried.

" Like bricks," whispered Anastatia.

" Does he love you ? "

" Sometimes I think so."

" What's his name ? "

" Rodney Spelvin."

" What ! "

" Oh, I know he writes the most awful bilge," said Anastatia, defensively, misinterpreting the yowl of horror which had proceeded from Jane. "All the same, he's a darling."

Jane could not speak. She stared at her sister-in-law aghast. Although she knew that if you put a driver in her hands she could paste the ball into the next county, there always seemed to her something fragile and helpless about Anastatia. William's sister was one of those small, rose-leaf girls with big blue eyes to whom good men instinctively want to give a stroke a hole and on whom bad men automatically prey. And when Jane reflected that Rodney Spelvin had to all intents and purposes preyed upon herself, who stood five foot seven in her shoes and, but for an innate love of animals, could have felled an ox with a blow, she shuddered at the thought of how he would prey on this innocent half-portion.

" You really love him ? " she quavered.

" If he beckoned to me in the middle of a medal round, I would come to him," said Anastatia.

Jane realized that further words were useless. A sickening sense of helplessness obsessed her. Something ought to be done about this terrible thing, but what could she do ? She was so ashamed of her past madness that not even to warn this girl could she reveal that she had once been engaged to Rodney Spelvin herself ; that he had recited poetry on the green while she was putting ; and that, later, he had hypnotized her into taking William and little Braid to live in a studio full of samovars. These revelations would no doubt open Anastatia's eyes, but she could not make them.

And then, suddenly, Fate pointed out a way.

It was Jane's practice to go twice a week to the cinema palace in the village ; and two nights later she set forth as usual and

took her place just as the entertainment was about to begin.

At first she was only mildly interested. The title of the picture, "Tried in the Furnace," had suggested nothing to her. Being a regular patron of the silver screen, she knew that it might quite easily turn out to be an educational film on the subject of clinker-coal. But as the action began to develop she found herself leaning forward in her seat, blindly crushing a caramel between her fingers. For scarcely had the operator started to turn the crank when inspiration came to her.

Of the main plot of "Tried in the Furnace" she retained, when finally she reeled out into the open air, only a confused recollection. It had something to do with money not bringing happiness or happiness not bringing money, she could not remember which. But the part which remained graven upon her mind was the bit where Gloria Gooch goes by night to the apartments of the libertine, to beg him to spare her sister, whom he has entangled in his toils.

Jane saw her duty clearly. She must go to Rodney Spelvin and conjure him by the memory of their ancient love to spare Anastatia.

"You really love him?" she quavered.
"If he beckoned to me in the middle of a medal round, I would come to him."

IT was not the easiest of tasks to put this scheme into operation. Gloria Gooch, being married to a scholarly man who spent nearly all his time in a library a hundred yards long, had been fortunately situated in the matter of paying visits to libertines; but for Jane the job was more difficult. William expected her to play a couple of rounds with him in the morning and another in the afternoon, which rather cut into her time. However, Fate was still on her side, for one morning at breakfast William announced that business called him to town.

"Why don't you come, too?" he said.

Jane started.

"No. No, I don't think I will, thanks."

"Give you lunch somewhere."

"No. I want to stay here and do some practice-putting."

"All right. I'll try to get back in time for a round in the evening."

Remorse gnawed at Jane's vitals. She had never deceived William before. She kissed him with even more than her usual fondness when he left to catch the ten-forty-five. She waved to him till he was out of sight; then, bounding back into the house, leaped at the telephone and, after a series of conversations with the Marks-Morris Glue Factory, the Poor Pussy Home for Indigent Cats, and Messrs. Oakes, Oakes, and Parbury, dealers in fancy goods, at last found herself in communication with Rodney Spelvin.

"Rodney?" she said, and held her breath, fearful at this breaking of a two years' silence and yet loath to hear another strange voice say "Wadnumjerwant?" "Is that you, Rodney?"

"Yes. Who is that?"

"Mrs. Bates. Rodney, can you give me lunch at the Alcazar to-day at one?"

"Can I!" Not even the fact that some unknown basso had got on the wire and was asking if that was Mr. Bootle could blur the enthusiasm in his voice. "I should say so!"

"One o'clock, then," said Jane. His enthusiastic response had relieved her. If by merely speaking she could stir him so, to bend him to her will when they met face to face would be pie.

"One o'clock," said Rodney.

Jane hung up the receiver and went to her room to try on hats.

THE impression came to Jane, when she entered the lobby of the restaurant and saw him waiting, that Rodney Spelvin looked somehow different from the Rodney she remembered. His handsome face had a deeper and more thoughtful expression, as if he had been through some ennobling experience.

"Well, here I am," she said, going to him and affecting a jauntiness which she did not feel.

He looked at her, and there was in his eyes that unmistakable goggle which comes to men suddenly addressed in a public spot by women whom, to the best of their recollection, they do not know from Eve.

"How are you?" he said. He seemed to pull himself together. "You're looking splendid."

"You're looking fine," said Jane.

"You're looking awfully well," said Rodney.

"You're looking awfully well," said Jane.

"You're looking fine," said Rodney.

There was a pause.

"You'll excuse me glancing at my watch," said Rodney. "I have an appointment to lunch with—er—somebody here, and it's past the time."

"But you're lunching with me," said Jane, puzzled.

"With you?"

"Yes. I rang you up this morning."

Rodney gaped.

"Was it you who 'phoned? I thought you said 'Miss Bates.'"

"No, Mrs. Bates."

"Mrs. Bates?"

"Mrs. Bates."

"Of course. You're Mrs. Bates."

"Had you forgotten me?" said Jane, in spite of herself a little piqued.

"Forgotten you, dear lady! As if I could!" said Rodney, with a return of his old manner. "Well, shall we go in and have lunch?"

"All right," said Jane.

She felt embarrassed and ill at ease. The fact that Rodney had obviously succeeded in remembering her only after the effort of a lifetime seemed to her to fling a spanner into the machinery of her plans at the very outset. It was going to be difficult, she realized, to conjure him by the memory of their ancient love to spare Anastatia; for the whole essence of the idea of conjuring anyone by the memory of their ancient love is that the party of the second part should be aware that there ever was such a thing.

At the luncheon-table conversation proceeded fitfully. Rodney said that this morning he could have sworn it was going to rain, and Jane said she had thought so, too, and Rodney said that now it looked as if the weather might hold up, and Jane said Yes, didn't it? and Rodney said he hoped the weather would hold up because rain was such a nuisance, and Jane said Yes, wasn't it? Rodney said yesterday had been a nice day, and Jane said Yes, and Rodney said that it seemed to be getting a little warmer, and Jane said Yes, and Rodney said that summer would be here any moment now, and Jane said Yes wouldn't it? and Rodney said he hoped it would not be too hot this summer, but that, as a matter of fact, when you came right down to it, what one minded was not so much the heat as the humidity, and Jane said Yes, didn't one?

In short, by the time they rose and left the restaurant, not a word had been spoken that could have provoked the censure of the sternest critic. Yet William Bates, catching sight of them as they passed down the aisle, started as if he had been struck by lightning. He had happened to find himself near the Alcazar at lunch-time and had dropped in for a chop; and, peering round the pillar which had hidden his table from theirs, he stared after them with saucer-like eyes.

"Oh, dash it!" said William.

This William Bates, as I have indicated in my previous references to him, was not an abnormally emotional or temperamental man. Built physically on the lines of a motor-lorry, he had much of that vehicle's placid and even phlegmatic outlook on life Few things had the power to ruffle William, but, unfortunately, it so happened that one of these things was Rodney Spelvin. He had never been able entirely to overcome his jealousy of this man. It had been Rodney who had come within an ace of scooping Jane from him in the days when she had been Miss Packard. It had been Rodney who had temporarily broken up his home some years later by persuading Jane to become a member of the artistic set. And now, unless his eyes jolly well deceived him, this human gumboil was once more busy on his dastardly work. Too dashed thick, was William's view of the matter; and he gnashed his teeth in such a spasm of resentful fury that a man lunching at the next table told the waiter to switch off the electric fan, as it had begun to creak unendurably.

JANE was reading in the drawing-room when William reached home that night.

"Had a nice day?" asked William.

"Quite nice," said Jane.

"Play golf?" asked William.

"Just practised," said Jane.

"Lunch at the club?"

"Yes."

"I thought I saw that bloke Spelvin in town," said William. Jane wrinkled her forehead.

"Spelvin? Oh, you mean Rodney Spelvin? Did you? I see he's got a new book coming out."

"You never run into him these days, do you?"

"Oh, no. It must be two years since I saw him."

"Oh?" said William. "Well, I'll be going upstairs and dressing."

It seemed to Jane, as the door closed, that she heard a curious clicking noise, and she wondered for a moment if little Braid had got out of bed and was playing with the Mah-Jongg counters. But it was only William gnashing his teeth.

William Bates, catching sight of them as they passed down the aisle, started as if he had been struck by lightning.

THERE is nothing sadder in this life than the spectacle of a husband and wife with practically identical handicaps drifting apart; and to dwell unnecessarily on such a spectacle is, to my mind, ghoulish. It is not my purpose, therefore, to weary you with a detailed description of the hourly widening of the breach between this once ideally united pair. Suffice it to say that within a few days of the conversation just related the entire atmosphere of this happy home had completely altered. On the Tuesday, William excused himself from the morning round on the plea that he had promised Peter Willard a match, and Jane said What a pity! On Tuesday afternoon William said that his head ached, and Jane said Isn't that too bad? On Wednesday morning William said he had lumbago, and Jane, her sensitive feelings now deeply wounded, said Oh, had he? After that, it came to be agreed between them by silent compact that they should play together no more.

Also, they began to avoid one another in the house. Jane would sit in the drawing-room, while William retired down the passage to his den. In short, if you had added a couple of ikons and a photograph of Trotsky, you would have had a *mise en scène* which would have fitted a Russian novel like the paper on the wall.

One evening, about a week after the

beginning of this tragic state of affairs, Jane was sitting in the drawing-room, trying to read Braid on Casual Water. But the print seemed blurred and the philosophy too metaphysical to be grasped. She laid the book down and stared sadly before her.

Every moment of these black days had affected Jane like a stymie on the last green. She could not understand how it was that William should have come to suspect, but that he did suspect was plain; and she writhed on the horns of a dilemma. All she had to do to win him back again was to go to him and tell him of Anastatia's fatal entanglement. But what would happen then? Undoubtedly he would feel it his duty as a brother to warn the girl against Rodney Spelvin; and Jane instinctively knew that William warning anyone against Rodney Spelvin would sound like a private of the line giving his candid opinion of the sergeant-major.

Inevitably, in this case, Anastatia, a spirited girl and deeply in love, would take offence at his words and leave the house. And if she left the house, what would be the effect on little Braid's mashie-play? Already, in less than a fortnight, the gifted girl had taught him more about the chip-shot from ten to fifteen yards off the green than the local pro. had been able to do in two years. Her departure would be absolutely disastrous.

What it amounted to was that she must sacrifice her husband's happiness or her child's future; and the problem of which was to get the loser's end was becoming daily more insoluble.

She was still brooding on it when the postman arrived with the evening mail, and the maid brought the letters into the drawing-room.

Jane sorted them out. There were three for William, which she gave to the maid to take to him in his den. There were two for herself, both bills. And there was one for Anastatia, in the well-remembered handwriting of Rodney Spelvin.

Jane placed this letter on the mantelpiece, and stood looking at it like a cat at a canary. Anastatia was away for the day, visiting friends who lived a few stations down the line; and every womanly instinct in Jane urged her to get hold of a kettle and steam the gum off the envelope. She had almost made up her mind to disembowel the thing and write "Opened in error" on it, when the telephone suddenly went off like a bomb and nearly startled her into a decline. Coming at that moment, it sounded like the Voice of Conscience.

"Hullo?" said Jane.

"Hullo!" replied a voice.

Jane clucked like a hen with uncontrollable emotion. It was Rodney.

"Is that you?" asked Rodney.

"Yes," said Jane.

And so it was, she told herself.

"Your voice is like music," said Rodney.

This may or may not have been the case, but at any rate it was exactly like every other female voice when heard on the telephone. Rodney prattled on without a suspicion.

"Have you got my letter yet?"

"No," said Jane. She hesitated. "What was in it?" she asked, tremulously.

"It was to ask you to come to my house to-morrow at four."

"To your house!" faltered Jane.

"Yes. Everything is ready. I will send the servants out, so that we shall be quite alone. You will come, won't you?"

The room was shimmering before Jane's eyes, but she regained command of herself with a strong effort.

"Yes," she said. "I will be there."

She spoke softly, but there was a note of menace in her voice. Yes, she would indeed be there. From the very moment when this man had made his monstrous proposal, she had been asking herself what Gloria Gooch would have done in a crisis like this. And the answer was plain. Gloria Gooch, if her sister-in-law was intending to visit the apartments of a libertine, would have gone there herself to save the poor child from the consequences of her infatuated folly.

"Yes," said Jane, "I will be there."

"You have made me the happiest man in the world," said Rodney. "I will meet you at the corner of the street at four, then." He paused. "What is that curious clicking noise?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Jane. "I noticed it myself. Something wrong with the wire, I suppose."

"I thought it was somebody playing the castanets. Until to-morrow, then, good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Jane replaced the receiver. And William, who had been listening to every word of the conversation on the extension in his den, replaced his receiver, too.

ANASTATIA came back from her visit late that night. She took her letter, and read it without comment. At breakfast next morning she said that she would be compelled to go into town that day.

"I want to see my dressmaker," she said.

"I'll come, too," said Jane. "I want to see my dentist."

"So will I," said William. "I want to see my lawyer."

"That will be nice," said Anastatia, after a pause.

"Very nice," said Jane, after another pause.

"We might all lunch together," said Anastatia. "My appointment is not till four."

"I should love it," said Jane. "My appointment is at four, too."

"So is mine," said William.

"What a coincidence!" said Jane, trying to speak brightly.

"Yes," said William. He may have been trying to speak brightly, too; but, if so, he failed. Jane was too young to have seen Salvini in "Othello," but, had she witnessed that great tragedian's performance, she could not have failed to be struck by the resemblance between his manner in the pillow scene and William's now.

"Then shall we all lunch together?" said Anastatia.

"I shall lunch at my club," said William, curtly.

"William seems to have a grouch," said Anastatia.

"Ha!" said William.

He raised his fork and drove it with sickening violence at his sausage.

SO Jane had a quiet little woman's lunch at a confectioner's alone with Anastatia. Jane ordered a tongue-and-lettuce sandwich, two macaroons, marsh-mallows, ginger-ale, and cocoa; and Anastatia ordered pineapple chunks with whipped cream, tomatoes stuffed with beetroot, three dill pickles, a raspberry nut sundae, and hot chocolate. And, while getting outside this garbage, they talked merrily, as women will, of every subject but the one that really occupied their minds. When Anastatia got up and said good-bye with a final reference to her dressmaker, Jane shuddered at the depths of deceit to which the modern girl can sink.

It was now about a quarter to three, so Jane had an hour to kill before going to the rendezvous. She wandered about the streets, and never had time appeared to her to pass so slowly, never had a city been so congested with hard-eyed and suspicious citizens. Every second person she met seemed to glare at her as if he or she had guessed her secret.

The very elements joined in the general disapproval. The sky had turned a sullen grey, and far-away thunder muttered faintly, like an impatient golfer held up on the tee by a slow foursome. It was a relief when at length she found herself at the back of Rodney Spelvin's house, standing before the scullery window, which it was her intention to force with the pocket-knife won in happier days as second prize in a competition at a summer hotel for those with handicaps above eighteen.

But the relief did not last long. Despite the fact that she was about to enter this evil house with the best motives, a sense of almost intolerable guilt oppressed her. If William should ever get to know of this! Wow! felt Jane.

How long she would have hesitated before the window, one cannot say. But at this moment, glancing guiltily round, she happened to catch the eye of a cat which was sitting on a near-by wall, and she read in this cat's eye such cynical derision that the urge came upon her to get out of its range as quickly as possible. It was a cat that had manifestly seen a lot of life, and it was plainly putting an entirely wrong construction on her behaviour. Jane shivered, and with a quick jerk prised the window open and climbed in.

It was two years since she had entered this house, but once she had reached the hall she remembered its topography perfectly. She mounted the stairs to the large studio sitting-room on the first floor, the scene of so many Bohemian parties in that dark period of her artistic life. It was here, she knew, that Rodney would bring his victim.

The studio was one of those dim, over-ornamented rooms which appeal to men like Rodney Spelvin. Heavy curtains hung in front of the windows. One corner was cut off by a high-backed Chesterfield. At the far end was an alcove, curtained like the windows. Once Jane had admired this studio, but now it made her shiver. It seemed to her one of those nests in which, as the sub-title of "Tried in the Furnace" had said, only eggs of evil are hatched. She paced the thick carpet restlessly, and suddenly there came to her the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

Jane stopped, every muscle tense. The moment had arrived. She faced the door, tight-lipped. It comforted her a little in this crisis to reflect that Rodney was not one of those massive Ethel M. Dell libertines who might make things unpleasant for an intruder. He was only a welter-weight egg of evil; and, if he tried to start anything, a girl of her physique would have little or no difficulty in knocking the stuffing out of him.

The footsteps reached the door. The handle turned. The door opened. And in strode William Bates, followed by two men in bowler hats.

"Ha!" said William.

Jane's lips parted, but no sound came from them. She staggered back a pace or two. William, advancing into the centre of the room, folded his arms and gazed at her with burning eyes.

"So," said William, and the words seemed forced like drops of vitriol from between

his clenched teeth, "I find you here, dash it!"

Jane choked convulsively. Years ago, when an innocent child, she had seen a conjurer produce a rabbit out of a top-hat which an instant before had been conclusively proved to be empty. The sudden apparition of William affected her with much the same sensations as she had experienced then.

"How-ow-ow——?" she said.

"I beg your pardon?" said William, coldly.

"How-ow-ow——?"

"Explain yourself," said William.

"How-ow-ow did you get here? And who-oo-oo are these men?"

William seemed to become aware for the first time of the presence of his two companions. He moved a hand in a hasty gesture of introduction.

"Mr. Reginald Brown and Mr. Cyril Delancey—my wife," he said, curtly.

The two men bowed slightly and raised their bowler hats.

"Pleased to meet you," said one.

"Most awfully charmed," said the other.

"They are detectives," said William.

"Detectives!"

"From the Quick Results Agency."

"Limited," added Mr. Delancey.

"Limited," said William. "When I became aware of your clandestine intrigues, I went to the agency and they gave me their two best men."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Brown, blushing a little.

"Most frightfully decent of you to put it that way," said Mr. Delancey.

William regarded Jane sternly.

"I knew you were going to be here at four o'clock," he said. "I overheard you making the assignation on the telephone."

"Oh, William!"

"Woman," said William, "where is your paramour?"

"Really, really," said Mr. Delancey, deprecatingly.

"Keep it clean," urged Mr. Brown.

"Your partner in sin, where is he? I am going to take him and tear him into little bits and stuff him down his throat and make him swallow himself."

"Fair enough," said Mr. Brown.

"Perfectly in order," said Mr. Delancey.

Jane uttered a stricken cry.

"William," she screamed, "I can explain all."

"All?" said Mr. Delancey.

"All?" said Mr. Brown.

"All," said Jane.

"All?" said William.

"All," said Jane.

William sneered bitterly.

"I'll bet you can't," he said.

"I'll bet I can," said Jane.

"Well?"

"I came here to save Anastatia."

"Anastatia!"

"Anastatia."

"My sister?"

"Your sister."

"His sister Anastatia," explained Mr. Brown to Mr. Delancey in an undertone.

"What from?" asked William.

"From Rodney Spelvin. Oh, William, can't you understand?"

"No, I'm dashed if I can."

"I, too," said Mr. Delancey, "must confess myself a little fogged. And you, Reggie?"

"Completely, Cyril," said Mr. Brown, removing his bowler hat with a puzzled frown, examining the maker's name, and putting it on again.

"The poor child is infatuated with this man."

"With the bloke Spelvin?"

"Yes. She is coming here with him at four o'clock."

"Important," said Mr. Brown, producing a note-book and making an entry.

"Important, if true," agreed Mr. Delancey.

"But I heard you making the appointment with the bloke Spelvin over the 'phone," said William.

"He thought I was Anastatia. And I came here to save her."

WILLIAM was silent and thoughtful for a few moments.

"It all sounds very nice and plausible," he said, "but there's just one thing wrong. I'm not a very clever sort of bird, but I can see where your story slips up. If what you say is true, where is Anastatia?"

"Just coming in now," whispered Jane. "Hist!"

"Hist, Reggie!" whispered Mr. Delancey.

They listened. Yes, the front door had banged, and feet were ascending the staircase.

"Hide!" said Jane, urgently.

"Why?" said William.

"So that you can overhear what they say and jump out and confront them."

"Sound," said Mr. Delancey.

"Very sound," said Mr. Brown.

The two detectives concealed themselves in the alcove. William retired behind the curtains in front of the window. Jane dived behind the Chesterfield. A moment later the door opened.

Crouching in her corner, Jane could see nothing, but every word that was spoken came to her ears; and with every syllable her horror deepened.

"Give me your things," she heard Rodney say, "and then we will go upstairs."

"Look here," interrupted William, folding his arms. "What are you doing in this man's rooms?"

"Giving him a golf lesson, of course. And I wish you wouldn't interrupt."

Jane shivered. The curtains by the window shook. From the direction of the alcove there came a soft scratching sound, as the two detectives made an entry in their note-books.

For a moment after this there was silence. Then Anastatia uttered a sharp, protesting cry.

"Ah, no, no! Please, please!"

"But why not?" came Rodney's voice.

"It is wrong—wrong."

"I can't see why."

"It is, it is! You must not do that. Oh, please, please don't hold so tight."

There was a swishing sound, and through the curtains before the window a large form burst. Jane raised her head above the Chesterfield.

William was standing there, a menacing figure. The two detectives had left the alcove and were moistening their pencils. And in the middle of the room stood Rodney Spelvin, stooping slightly and grasping Anastatia's parasol in his hands.

"I don't get it," he said. "Why is it wrong to hold the dam' thing tight?" He looked up and perceived his visitors. "Ah, Bates," he said, absently. He turned

to Anastatia again. "I should have thought that the tighter you held it, the more force you would get into the shot."

"But don't you see, you poor zimp," replied Anastatia, "that you've got to keep the ball straight. If you grip the shaft as if you were a drowning man clutching at a straw and keep your fingers under like that, you'll pull like the dickens and probably land out of bounds or in the rough. What's the good of getting force into the shot if the ball goes in the wrong direction, you cloth-headed goof?"

"I see now," said Rodney, humbly. "How right you always are!"

"Look here," interrupted William, folding his arms. "What is the meaning of this?"

"You want to grip firmly but lightly," said Anastatia.

"Firmly but lightly," echoed Rodney.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"And with the fingers. Not with the palms."

"What is the meaning of this?" thundered William. "Anastatia, what are you doing in this man's rooms?"

"Giving him a golf lesson, of course. And I wish you wouldn't interrupt."

"Yes, yes," said Rodney, a little testily. 'Don't interrupt, Bates, there's a good fellow. Surely you have things to occupy you elsewhere?"

"We'll go upstairs," said Anastatia, "where we can be alone."

"You will not go upstairs," barked William.

"We shall get on much better there," explained Anastatia. "Rodney has fitted up the top-floor back as an indoor practising room."

Jane darted forward with a maternal cry. "My poor child, has this scoundrel dared to delude you by pretending to be a golfer? Darling, he is nothing of the kind."

Mr. Reginald Brown coughed. For some moments he had been twitching restlessly.

"Talking of golf," he said, "it might interest you to hear of a little experience I had the other day at Marshy Moor. I had got a nice drive off the tee, nothing record-breaking, you understand, but straight and sweet. And what was my astonishment on walking up to play my second to find——"

"A rather similar thing happened to me at Windy Waste last Tuesday," interrupted Mr. Delancey. "I had hooked my drive the merest trifle, and my caddie said to me, 'You're out of bounds.' 'I am not out of bounds,' I replied, perhaps a little tersely, for the lad had annoyed me by a persistent habit of sniffing. 'Yes, you are out of bounds,' he said. 'No, I am not out of bounds,' I retorted. Well, believe me or believe me not, when I got up to my ball——"

"Shut up!" said William.

'Just as you say, sir," replied Mr. Delancey, courteously.

RODNEY SPELVIN drew himself up, and in spite of her loathing for his villainy Jane could not help feeling what a noble and romantic figure he made. His face was pale, but his voice did not falter.

"You are right," he said. "I am not a golfer. But with the help of this splendid girl here, I hope humbly to be one some day. Ah, I know what you are going to say," he went on, raising a hand. "You are about to ask how a man who has wasted his life as I have done can dare to entertain the mad dream of ever acquiring a decent handicap. But never forget," proceeded Rodney, in a low, quivering voice, "that Walter J. Travis was nearly forty before he touched a club, and a few years later he won the British Amateur."

"True," murmured William.

"True, true," said Mr. Delancey and Mr. Brown. They lifted their bowler hats reverently.

"I am thirty-three years old," continued Rodney, "and for fourteen of those thirty-three years I have been writing poetry—aye, and novels with a poignant sex-appeal, and if ever I gave a thought to this divine game it was but to sneer at it. But last summer I saw the light."

"Glory! Glory!" cried Mr. Brown.

"One afternoon I was persuaded to try a drive. I took the club with a mocking, contemptuous laugh." He paused, and a wild light came into his eyes. "I brought off a perfect snifter," he said, emotionally. "Two hundred yards and as straight as a whistle. And, as I stood there gazing after the ball, something seemed to run up my spine and bite me in the neck. It was the golf-germ."

"Always the way," said Mr. Brown. "I remember the first drive I ever made. I took a nice easy stance——"

"The first drive I made," said Mr. Delancey, "you won't believe this, but it's a fact, was a full——"

"From that moment," continued Rodney Spelvin, "I have had but one ambition—to somehow or other, cost what it might, get down into single figures." He laughed bitterly. "You see," he said, "I cannot even speak of this thing without splitting my infinitives. And, even as I split my infinitives, so did I split my drivers. After that first heavenly slosh I didn't seem able to do anything right."

He broke off, his face working. William cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Yes, but, dash it," he said, "all this doesn't explain why I find you alone with

my sister in what I might call your lair."

"The explanation is simple," said Rodney Spelvin. "This sweet girl is the only person in the world who seems able to simply and intelligently and in a few easily understood words make clear the knack of the thing. There is none like her, none. I have been to pro. after pro., but not one has been any good to me. I am a temperamental man, and there is a lack of sympathy and human understanding about these professionals which jars on my artist soul. They look at you as if you were a half-witted child. They click their tongues. They make odd Scotch noises. I could not endure the strain. And then this wonderful girl, to whom in a burst of emotion I had confided my unhappy case, offered to give me private lessons. So I went with her to some of those indoor practising places. But here, too, my sensibilities were racked by the fact that unsympathetic eyes observed me. So I fixed up a room here where we could be alone."

"And, instead of going there," said Anastatia, "we are wasting half the afternoon talking."

William brooded for a while. He was not a quick thinker.

"Well, look here," he said at length, "this is the point. This is the nub of the thing. This is where I want you to follow me very closely. Have you asked Anastatia to marry you?"

"Marry me?" Rodney gazed at him, shocked. "Have I asked her to marry me? I, who am not worthy to polish the blade of her niblick! I, who have not even a thirty handicap, ask a girl to marry me who was in the semi-final of last year's Ladies' Open! No, no, Bates, I may be a *vers-libre* poet, but I have some sense of what is fitting. I love her, yes. I love her with a fervour which causes me to frequently and for hours at a time lie tossing sleeplessly upon my pillow. But I would not dare to ask her to marry me."

Anastatia burst into a peal of girlish laughter.

"You poor chump!" she cried. "Is that what has been the matter all this time? I couldn't make out what the trouble was. Why, I'm crazy about you. I'll marry you any time you give the word."

Rodney reeled.

"What!"

"Of course I will."

"Anastatia!"

"Rodney!"

He folded her in his arms.

"Well, I'm dashed," said William. "It looks to me as if I had been making rather a lot of silly fuss about nothing. Jane, I wronged you."

"It was my fault."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Jane!"

"William!"

He folded her in his arms. The two detectives, having entered the circumstances in their note-books, looked at one another with moist eyes.

"Cyril!" said Mr. Brown.

"Reggie!" said Mr. Delancey.

Their hands met in a brotherly clasp.

"AND so," concluded the Oldest Member, "all ended happily. The storm-tossed lives of William Bates, Jane Packard, and Rodney Spelvin came safely at long last into harbour. At the subsequent wedding, William and Jane's present of a complete golfing outfit, including eight dozen new balls, a cloth cap, and a pair of spiked shoes, was generally admired by all who inspected the gifts during the reception.

"From that time forward the four of them have been inseparable. Rodney and Anastatia took a little cottage close to that of William and Jane, and rarely does a day pass without a close foursome between the two couples. William and Jane being steady tens and Anastatia scratch and Rodney a persevering eighteen, it makes an ideal match."

"What does?" asked the secretary, waking from his reverie.

"This one."

"Which?"

"I see," said the Oldest Member, sympathetically, "that your troubles, weighing on your mind, have caused you to follow my little narrative less closely than you might have done. Never mind, I will tell it again.

"The story" (said the Oldest Member) "which I am about to relate begins at a time when——"

THE LAND OF MIST

OR

The Quest of Edward Malone

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

VI. (Continued).

WHERE OUR COMMISSIONERS HAVE A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

BEHOLD Malone and Enid Challenger, then, upon a fresh psychic adventure. They picked Atkinson up at Wimpole Street, and then traversed that long, roaring, rushing driving-belt of the great City which extends through Oxford Street and Bayswater to Notting Hill and the stately Victorian houses of Holland Park. It was at one of these that the taxi drew up, a large, imposing building, standing back a little from the road. A smart maid admitted them, and the subdued light of the tinted hall-lamp fell upon shining linoleum and polished woodwork with the gleam of white marble statuary in the corner. Enid's female perceptions told her of a well-run, well-appointed establishment, with a capable direction at the head. This direction took the shape of a kindly Scottish lady who met them in the hall and greeted Mr. Atkinson as an old friend. She was, in turn, introduced to the journalists as Mrs. Ogilvy. Malone had already heard how her husband and she had founded and run this remarkable institute, which is the centre of psychic experiment in London, at a very great cost, both in labour and in money, to themselves.

"Linden and his wife have gone up," said Mrs. Ogilvy. "He seems to think that the conditions are favourable. The rest are in the drawing-room. Won't you join them for a few minutes?"

Quite a number of people had gathered for the séance, some of them old psychic students who were mildly interested, others beginners who looked about them with rather startled eyes, wondering what was going to happen next. A tall man was standing near the door, who turned and disclosed the tawny beard and open face of Algernon Mailey. He shook hands with the new-comers.

"Another experience, Mr. Malone? Well, I thought you gave a very fair account of the last. You are still a neophyte, but you are well within the gates of the Temple. Are you alarmed, Miss Challenger?"

"I don't think I could be while you were around," she answered.

He laughed.

"Of course, a materialization séance is a little different to any other—more impres-

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sive, in a way. You'll find it very instructive, Malone, as bearing upon psychic photography and other matters. By the way, you should try for a psychic picture. The famous Hope works upstairs."

"I always thought that that at least was fraud."

"On the contrary, I should say it was the best-established of all phenomena, the one which leaves the most permanent proof. I've been a dozen times under every possible test condition. The real trouble is, not that it lends itself to fraud, but that it lends itself to exploitation by that villainous journalism which cares only for a sensation. Do you know anyone here?"

"No, we don't."

"The tall, handsome lady is the Duchess of Rossland. Then there are Lord and Lady Montnoir, the middle-aged couple near the fire. Real good folk, and among the very few of the aristocracy who have shown earnestness and moral courage in this matter. The talkative lady is Miss Badley, who lives for séances, a jaded Society woman in search of new sensations—always visible, always audible, and always empty. I don't know the two men. I heard someone say they were psychic researchers from the University. The stout man with the lady in black is Sir James Smith—they lost two boys in the war. The tall, dark person is a weird man named Jakes, who lives, I understand, in one room and seldom comes out save for a séance."

"And the man with the horn glasses?"

"That is a pompous ass named Weatherby. He is one of those who wander about on the obscure edges of Masonry, talking with whispers and reverence of mysteries where no mystery is. Spiritualism, with its very real and awful mysteries, is to him a vulgar thing because it brings consolation to common folk, but he loves to read papers on the Palladian Cultus, ancient and accepted Scottish rites, and Baphometic figures. Eliphas Levi is his prophet."

"It sounds very learned," said Enid.

"Or very absurd. But, hullo! Here are mutual friends."

THE two Bolsovers had arrived, very hot and frowzy and genial. There is no such leveller of classes as Spiritualism, and the charwoman with psychic force is the superior of the millionaire who lacks it. The Bolsovers and the aristocrats fraternized instantly. The Duchess was just asking for admission to the grocer's circle when Mrs. Ogilvy bustled in.

"I think everyone is here now," she said. "It is time to go upstairs."

The séance room was a large, comfortable chamber on the first floor, with a circle of easy chairs, and a curtain-hung divan, which served as a cabinet. The medium and his wife were waiting there. Mr. Linden was a gentle, large-featured man, stoutish in build, deep-chested, clean-shaven, with dreamy blue eyes and flaxen curly hair which rose in a pyramid at the apex of his head. He was of middle age. His wife was rather younger, with the sharp querulous expression of the tired housekeeper, and quick critical eyes, which softened into something like adoration when she looked at her husband. Her *rôle* was to explain matters and to guard his interests while he was unconscious.

"The sitters had better just take their own places," said the medium. "If you can alternate the sexes it is as well. Don't cross your knees, it breaks the current. If we have a materialization, don't grab at it. If you do, you are liable to injure me."

The two sleuths of the Psychic Society looked at each other knowingly. Mailey observed it.

"Quite right," he said. "I have seen two cases of dangerous hæmorrhage in the medium brought on by that very cause."

"Why?" asked Malone.

"Because the ectoplasm used is drawn from the medium. It recoils upon him like a snapped elastic band. Where it comes through the skin you get a bruise. Where it comes from mucous membrane you get bleeding."

"And when it comes from nothing, you get nothing," said the researcher, with a grin.

"I will explain the procedure in a few words," said Mrs. Ogilvy, when everyone was seated. "Mr. Linden does not enter the cabinet at all. He sits outside it, and as he tolerates red light you will be able to satisfy yourselves that he does not leave his seat. Mrs. Linden sits on the other side. She is there to regulate and explain. In the first place, we would wish you to examine the cabinet. One of you will also please lock the door on the inside and be responsible for the key."

The cabinet proved to be a mere tent of hangings, detached from the wall and standing on a solid platform. The researchers ferreted about inside it and stamped on the boards. All seemed solid.

"What is the use of it?" Malone whispered to Mailey.

"It serves as a reservoir and condensing place for the ectoplasmic vapour from the medium, which would otherwise diffuse over the room."

"It has been known to serve other purposes also," remarked one of the researchers, who overheard the conversation.

"That's true enough," said Mailey, philo-

sophically. "I am all in favour of caution and supervision."

"Well, it seems fraud-proof on this occasion, if the medium sits outside." The two researchers were agreed on this.

The medium was seated on one side of the little tent; his wife on the other. The light was out, and a small red lamp near the ceiling was just sufficient to enable outlines to be clearly seen. As the eye became accustomed to it some detail could also be observed.

"Mr. Linden will begin by some clairvoyant readings," said Mrs. Linden. Her whole attitude, seated beside the cabinet with her hands on her lap and the air of a proprietor, made Enid smile, for she thought of Mrs. Jarley and her waxworks.

Linden, who was not in trance, began to give clairvoyance. It was not very good. Possibly the mixed influence of so many sitters of various types at close quarters was too disturbing. That was the excuse which he himself gave when several of his descriptions were unrecognized. But Malone was more shocked by those which were recognized, since it was so clear that the word was put into the medium's mouth. It was the folly of the sitter rather than the fault of the medium, but it was disconcerting, all the same.

"I see a young man with brown eyes and a rather drooping moustache."

"Oh, darling, darling, have you then come back?" cried Miss Badley. "Oh, has he a message?"

"He sends his love and does not forget."

"Oh, how evidential! It is so exactly what the dear boy would have said. My first lover, you know," she added, in a simpering voice to the company. "He never fails to come. Mr. Linden has brought him again and again."

"There is a young fellow in khaki building up on the left. I see a symbol over his head. It might be a Greek cross."

"Jim—it is surely Jim!" cried Lady Smith.

"Yes. He nods his head."

"And the Greek cross is probably a propeller," said Sir James. "He was in the Air Service, you know."

Malone and Enid were both rather shocked. Mailey was also uneasy.

"This is not good," he whispered to Enid. "Wait a bit! You will get something better."

There were several good recognitions, and then someone resembling Summerlees was described for Malone. This was wisely discounted by him, since Linden might have been in the audience on the former occasion. Mrs. Debbs's exhibition seemed to him far more convincing than that of Linden.

"Wait a bit!" Mailey repeated.

"The medium will now try for materializations," said Mrs. Linden. "If the figures appear I would ask you not to touch them, save by request. Victor will tell you if you may do so. Victor is the medium's control."

The medium had settled down in his chair and he now began to draw long whistling breaths with deep intakes, puffing the air out between his lips. Finally he steadied down and seemed to sink into a deep coma, his chin upon his breast. Suddenly he spoke, but it seemed that his voice was better modulated and more cultivated than before.

"Good evening, all!" said the voice.

There was a general murmur of "Good evening, Victor."

"I am afraid that the vibrations are not very harmonious. The sceptical element is present, but not, I think, predominant, so that we may hope for results. Martin Lightfoot is doing what he can."

"That is the Indian control," Mailey whispered.

"I think that if you would start the gramophone it would be helpful. A hymn is always best, though there is no real objection to secular music. Give us what you think best, Mrs. Ogilvy."

There was the rasping of a needle which had not yet found its grooves. Then "Lead, Kindly Light" was churned out. The audience joined in in a subdued fashion. Mrs. Ogilvy then changed it to "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

"They often change the records themselves," said Mrs. Ogilvy, "but to-night there is not enough power."

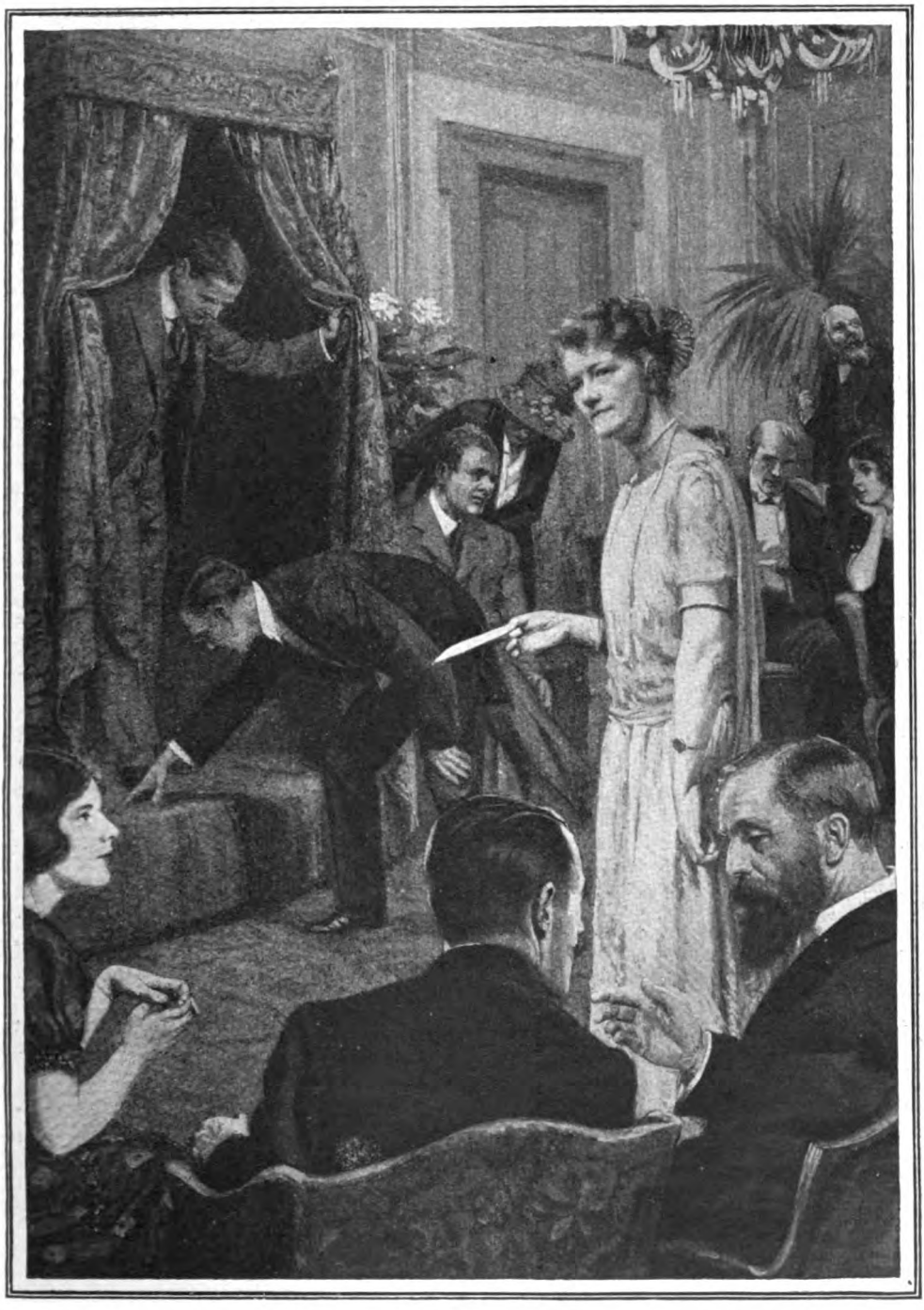
"Oh, yes," said the voice. "There is enough power, Mrs. Ogilvy, but we are anxious to conserve it all for the materializations. Martin says they are building up very well."

At this moment the curtain in front of the cabinet began to sway. It bellied out as if a strong wind were behind it. At the same time a breeze was felt by all who were in the circle, together with a sensation of cold.

"It is quite chilly," whispered Enid, with a shiver.

"It is not a subjective feeling," Mailey answered. "Mr. Harry Price has tested it with thermometric readings. So did Professor Crawford."

"My God!" cried a startled voice. It belonged to the pompous dabbler in mysteries, who was suddenly faced with a real mystery. The curtains of the cabinet had parted and a human figure had stolen noiselessly out. There was the medium clearly



The cabinet proved to be a mere tent of hangings, standing on a solid platform. The researchers ferreted about inside it and stamped on the boards. All seemed solid.

outlined on one side. There was Mrs. Linden, who had sprung to her feet, on the other. And, between them, the little black hesitating figure, which seemed to be terrified at its own position. Mrs. Linden soothed and encouraged it.

"Don't be alarmed, dear. It is all quite right. No one will hurt you.

"It is someone who has never been through before," she explained to the company. "Naturally it seems very strange to her. Just as strange as if we broke into their world. That's right, dear. You are gaining strength, I can see. Well done!"

The figure was moving forward. Everyone sat spellbound, with staring eyes. Miss Badley began to giggle hysterically. Weatherby lay back in his chair, gasping with horror. Neither Malone nor Enid felt any fear, but were consumed with curiosity. How marvellous to hear the humdrum flow of life in the street outside and to be face to face with such a sight as that!

Slowly the figure moved round. Now it was close to Enid and between her and the red light. Stooping, she could get the silhouette sharply outlined. It was that of a little elderly woman, with sharp, clear-cut features.

"It's Susan!" cried Mrs. Bolsover. "Oh, Susan, don't you know me?"

The figure turned and nodded her head.

"Yes, yes, dear, it is your sister Susie," cried her husband. "I never saw her in anything but black. Susan, speak to us!"

The head was shaken.

"They seldom speak the first time they come," said Mrs. Linden, whose rather blasé, businesslike air was in contrast to the intense emotion of the company. "I'm afraid she can't hold together long. Ah, there! She has gone!"

The figure had disappeared. There had been some backward movement towards the cabinet, but it seemed to the observers that she sank into the ground before she reached it. At any rate, she was gone.

"Gramophone, please!" said Mrs. Linden. Everyone relaxed and sat back with a sigh. The gramophone struck up a lively air. Suddenly the curtains parted and a second figure appeared.

It was a young girl, with flowing hair down her back. She came forward swiftly and with perfect assurance to the centre of the circle.

Mrs. Linden laughed in a satisfied way.

"Now you will get something good," she said. "Here is Lucille."

"Good evening, Lucille!" cried the Duchess. "I met you last month, you will remember, when your medium came to Maltraver Towers."

"Yes, yes, lady, I remember you. You have a little boy, Tommy, on our side of life. No, no, not dead, lady! We are far more alive than you are. All the fun and frolic are with us!"

She spoke in a high, clear voice and perfect English.

"Shall I show you what we do over here?"

She began a graceful gliding dance, while she whistled as melodiously as a bird. "Poor Susan could not do that. Susan has had no practice. Lucille knows how to use a built-up body."

"Do you remember me, Lucille?" asked Mailey.

"I remember you, Mr. Mailey. Big man with yellow beard."

For the second time in her life Enid had to pinch herself hard to satisfy herself that she was not dreaming. Was this graceful creature, who had now sat down in the centre of the circle, a real materialization of ectoplasm, used for the moment as a machine for expression by a soul that had passed, or was it an illusion of the senses, or was it a fraud? There were the three possibilities. An illusion was absurd when all had the same impression. Was it fraud? But this was certainly not the little old woman. She was inches taller and fair, not dark. And the cabinet was fraud-proof. It had been meticulously examined. Then it was true. But if it were true, what a vista of possibilities opened out. Was it not far the greatest matter which could claim the attention of the world?

MEANWHILE, Lucille had been so natural and the situation was so normal that even the most nervous had relaxed. The girl answered most cheerfully to every question, and they rained upon her from every side.

"Where did you live, Lucille?"

"Perhaps I had better answer that," interposed Mrs. Linden. "It will save the power. Lucille was bred in South Dakota, in the United States, and passed over at the age of fourteen. We have verified some of her statements."

"Are you glad you died, Lucille?"

"Glad for my own sake. Sorry for mother."

"Has your mother seen you since?"

"Poor mother is like a shut box. Lucille cannot open the lid."

"Are you happy?"

"Oh, yes, so gloriously happy."

"Is it right that you can come back?"

"Would God allow it if it were not right? What a wicked man you must be to ask!"

"What religion were you?"

"We were Roman Catholics."

"Is that the right religion?"

"All religions are right if they make you better."

"Then it does not matter?"

"It is what people do in daily life, not what they believe."

"Tell us more, Lucille."

"Lucille has little time. There are others who wish to come. If Lucille uses too much power, the others have less. Oh, God is very good and kind! You poor people on earth do not know how good and kind He is, because it is grey down here. But it is grey for your own good. It is to give you your chance to earn all the lovely things which wait for you. But you can only tell how wonderful He is when you get over here."

"Have you seen Him?"

"Seen Him! How could you see God? No, no. He is all round us and in us and in everything, but we do not see Him. Now, good-bye—good-bye!" She backed towards the cabinet and sank into the shadows.

NOW came a tremendous experience for Malone. A small, dark, rather broad figure of a woman appeared slowly from the cabinet. Mrs. Linden encouraged her, and then came across to the journalist.

"It is for you. You can break the circle. Come up to her."

Malone advanced and peered awestruck into the face of the apparition. There was not a foot between them. Surely that large head, that solid square outline, was familiar! He put his face still nearer—it was almost touching. He strained his eyes. It seemed to him that the features were semi-fluid, moulding themselves into a shape, as if some unseen hand was modelling them in putty.

"Mother!" he cried. "Mother!"

Instantly the figure threw up both her hands in a wild gesture of joy. The motion seemed to destroy her equilibrium and she vanished.

"She had not been through before. She could not speak," said Mrs. Linden, in her businesslike way. "It was your mother."

Malone went back, half stunned, to his seat. It is only when these things come to one's own address that one understands their full force. His mother! Ten years in her grave and yet standing before him. Could he *swear* it was his mother? No, he could not. Was he morally certain that it was his mother? Yes, he was morally certain. He was shaken to the core.

But other wonders diverted his thoughts. A young man had emerged briskly from the cabinet and had advanced to the front of Mailey, where he had halted.

"Hullo, Jock! Dear old Jock!" said Mailey. "My nephew," he explained to the company. "He always comes when I am with Linden."

"The power is sinking," said the lad, in a clear voice. "I can't stay very long. I am so glad to see you, Uncle. You know, we can see quite clearly in this light, even if you can't."

"Yes, I know you can. I say, Jock. I wanted to tell you that I told your mother I had seen you. She said her Church taught her it was wrong."

"I know. And that I was a demon." His voice broke in a sob.

"Don't blame her, Jock; she believes this."

"No, no, I don't blame her! She will know better some day. The day is coming soon when all truth will be manifest."

"Why, Jock, you are becoming quite a heretic."

"Love, Uncle! Love! That is all that counts. What matter what you believe if you are sweet and kind and unselfish as the Christ was of old."

"Have you seen the Christ?" asked someone.

"Not yet. Perhaps the time may come."

"Is he not in heaven, then?"

"There are many heavens. I am in a very humble one. But it is glorious, all the same—far, far better than earth."

Enid had thrust her head forward during this dialogue. Her eyes had got used to the light and she could see more clearly than before. The man who stood within a few feet of her was not human. Of that she had no doubt whatever, and yet the points were very subtle. Something in his strange, yellow-white colouring as contrasted with the faces of her neighbours. Something, also, in the curious stiffness of his carriage, as of a man in very rigid stays.

"Now, Jock," said Mailey, "give an address to the company. Tell them a few words about your life."

The figure hung his head, exactly as a shy youth would do in life.

"Oh, Uncle, I can't."

"Come, Jock, we love to listen to you."

"Teach the folk what death is," the figure began. "God wants them to know. That is why He lets us come back. It is nothing. You are no more changed than if you went into the next room. You can't believe you are dead. I didn't. It was only when I saw old Sam that I knew, for I was certain that he was dead, anyhow. Then I came back to mother. And——" his voice broke, "she would not receive me."

"Never mind, dear old Jock," said Mailey. "She will learn wisdom."

"Teach them the truth! Teach it to them! Oh, it is so much more important

than all the things men talk about. If papers for one week gave as much attention to psychic things as they do to football, it would be known to all. It is ignorance which stands——"

The observers were conscious of a sort of flash towards the cabinet, but the youth had disappeared.

"Power run down," said Mailey. "Poor lad, he held on to the last. He always did. That was how he died."

There was a long pause. The gramophone started again. Then there was a movement of the curtains. Something was emerging. Mrs. Linden sprang up and waved the figure back. The medium for the first time stirred in his chair and groaned.

"What is the matter, Mrs. Linden?"

"Only half formed," she answered. "The lower face had not materialized. Some of you would have been alarmed. I think that we shall have no more to-night. The power has sunk very low."

So it proved. The lights were gradually turned on. The medium lay with a white face and a clammy brow in his chair, while his wife sedulously watched over him, unbuttoning his collar and bathing his face from a water-glass. The company broke into little groups, discussing what they had seen.

"Oh, wasn't it thrilling?" cried Miss Badley. "It really was most exciting. But what a pity we could not see the one with the semi-materialized face!"

"Thank you, I have seen quite enough," said the pompous mystic, all the pomposity shaken out of him. "I confess that it has been rather too much for my nerves."

Mr. Atkinson found himself near the psychic researchers. "Well, what do you make of it?" he asked.

"I have seen it better done at Maskelyne's hall," said one.

"Oh, come, Scott!" said the other. "You've no right to say that. You admitted that the cabinet was fraud-proof."

"Well, so do the committees who go on the stage at Maskelyne's."

"Yes, but it is Maskelyne's own stage. This is not Linden's own stage. He has no machinery."

"*Populus vult decipi*," the other answered, shrugging his shoulders. "I should certainly reserve judgment." He moved away with the dignity of one who cannot be deceived, while his more rational companion still argued with him as they went.

"Did you hear that?" said Atkinson. "There is a certain class of psychic researcher who is absolutely incapable of receiving evidence. They misuse their brains by straining them to find a way round when the road is quite clear before them. When the human race advances into its new kingdom, these intellectual men will form the absolute rear."

"No, no," said Mailey, laughing. "The bishops are predestined to be the rearguard. I see them all marching in step, a solid body, with their gaiters and cassocks—the last in the whole world to reach spiritual truth."

"Oh, come," said Enid, "that is too severe. They are all good men."

"Of course they are. It's quite physiological. They are a body of elderly men, and the elderly brain is sclerosed and cannot record new impressions. It's not their fault, but the fact remains. You are very silent, Malone."

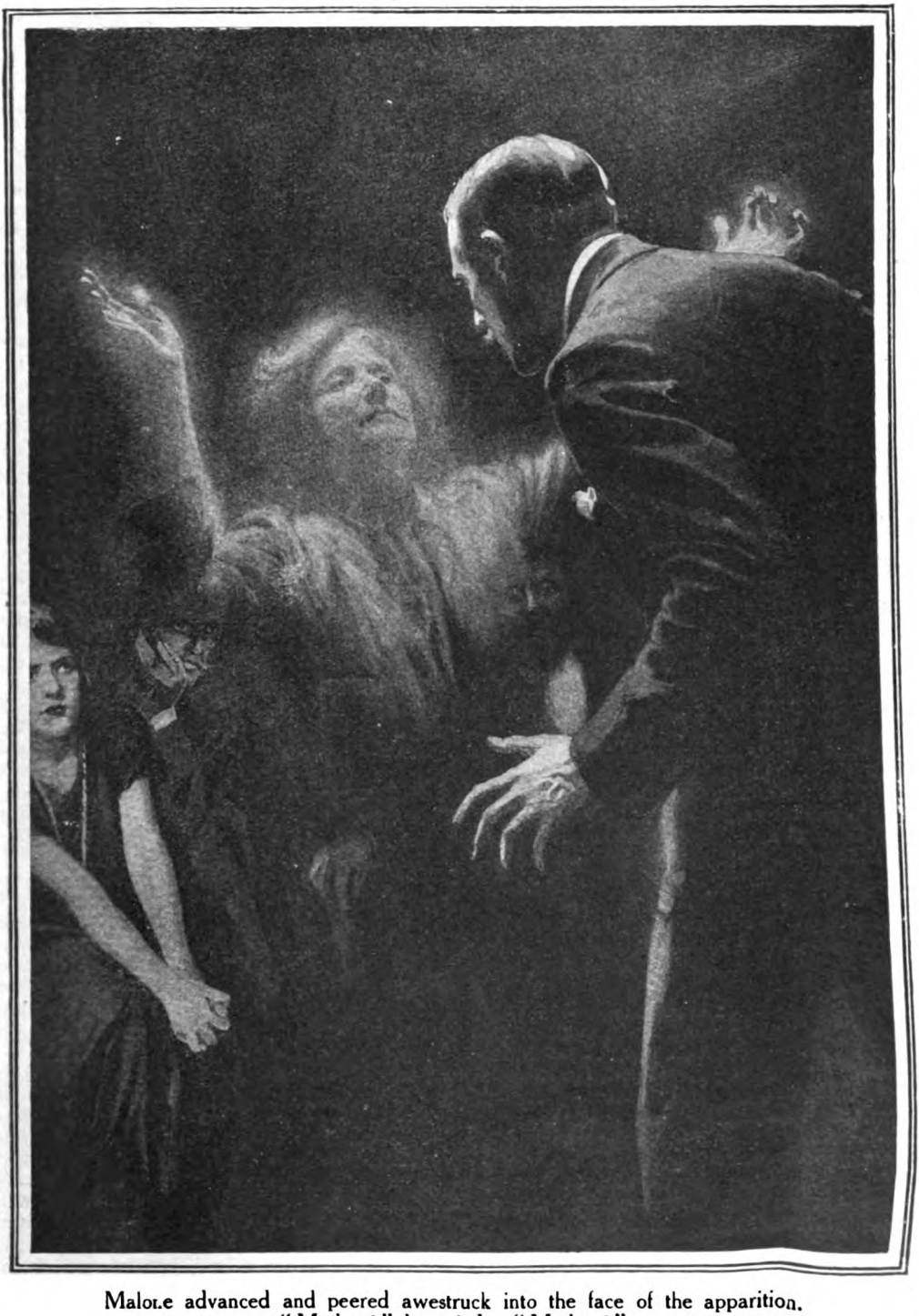
But Malone was thinking of a little squat dark figure which waved its hands in joy when he spoke to it. It was with that image in his mind that he turned from this room of wonders and passed down into the street.

VII.

IN WHICH THE READER IS SHOWN THE HABITS OF A NOTORIOUS CRIMINAL.

WE will now leave that little group with whom we have made our first exploration of these grey and ill-defined, but immensely important, regions of human thought and experiences. From the researchers we will turn to the researched. Come with me and we will visit Mr. Linden at home, and will examine the lights and shades which make up the life of a professional medium.

To reach him we will pass down the crowded thoroughfare of Tottenham Court Road, where the huge furniture emporia flank the way, and we will turn into a small street of drab houses which leads eastwards towards the British Museum. Tullis Street is the name, and forty the number. Here it is, one of a row, flat-faced, dull-coloured, and commonplace, with railed steps leading up to a discoloured door, and one front-room window, in which a huge gilt-edged Bible upon a small round table reassures the timid visitor. With the universal pass-key of imagination we open the dingy door, pass down a dark passage and up a narrow stair. It is nearly ten o'clock in the morning, and yet it is in his bedroom that we must seek the famous worker of miracles. The fact is



Malone advanced and peered awestruck into the face of the apparition.
"Mother!" he cried. "Mother!"

that he has had, as we have seen, an exhausting sitting the night before, and that he has to conserve his strength in the mornings.

At the moment of our inopportune, but invisible, visit he was sitting up, propped by the pillows, with a breakfast tray upon his knees. The vision he presented would have amused those who had prayed with him in the humble Spiritualist temples, or had sat with awe at the séances where he had exhibited the modern equivalents of the gifts of the Spirit. He looked unhealthily pallid in the dim morning light, and his curly hair rose up in a tangled pyramid above his broad intellectual brow. The open collar of his night-shirt displayed a broad bull's neck, and the depth of his chest and spread of his shoulders showed that he was a man of considerable personal strength. He was eating his breakfast with avidity, while he conversed with the little eager dark-eyed wife who was seated on the side of the bed.

"And you reckon it a good meeting, Mary?"

"Fair to middling, Tom. There was two of them researchers raking round with their feet and upsetting everybody. D'ye think those folk in the Bible would have got their phenomena if they had chaps of that sort on the premises? 'Of one accord,' that's what they say in the Book."

"Of course!" cried Linden, heartily. "Was the Duchess pleased?"

"Yes, I think she was very pleased. So was Mr. Atkinson, the surgeon. There was a new man there, called Malone, of the Press. Then Lord and Lady Montnoir got evidence, and so did Sir James Smith and Mr. Mailey."

"I wasn't satisfied with the clairvoyance," said the medium. "The silly idiots kept on putting things into my mind. 'That's surely my Uncle Sam,' and so forth. It blurs me so that I can see nothing clear."

"Yes, and they think they are helping! Helping to muddle you and deceive themselves. I know the kind."

"But I went under nicely, and I am glad there were some fine materializations. It took it out of me, though. I'm a rag this morning."

"They work you too hard, dear. I'll take you to Margate and build you up."

"Well, maybe at Easter we could do a week. It would be fine. I don't mind readings and clairvoyance, but the physicals do try you. I'm not as bad as Hallows. They say he just lies white and gasping on the floor after them."

"Yes," cried the woman, bitterly. "And then they run to him with whisky, and so they teach him to rely on the bottle and you get another case of a drunken medium. I know them. You keep off it, Tom!"

"Yes; one of our trade should stick to soft drinks. If he can stick to vegetables, too, he's all the better; but I can't preach that while I am wolfin' up ham and eggs. By gosh, Mary! it's past ten and I have a string of them comin' this morning. I'm going to make a bit to-day."

"You give it away as quick as you make it, Tom."

"Well, some hard cases come my way. So long as we can make both ends meet, what more do we want? I expect they will look after us all right."

"They have let down a lot of other poor mediums who did good work in their day."

"It's the rich folk that are to blame, not the Spirit-people," said Tom Linden, hotly. "It makes me see red when I remember these folk, Lady This and Countess That, declaring all the comfort they have had, and then leaving those who gave it to die in the gutter or rot in the workhouse. Poor old Tweedy and Soames and the rest all living on old-age pensions and the papers talking of the money that mediums make, while some damned conjurer makes more than all of us put together by a rotten imitation with two tons of machinery to help him!"

"Don't worry, dear," cried the medium's wife, putting her thin hand caressingly upon the tangled mane of her man. "It all comes level in time and everybody pays the price for what they have done."

Linden laughed loudly. "It's my Welsh half that comes out when I flare up. Let the conjurers take their dirty money and let the rich folk keep their purses shut. I wonder what they think money is for? Paying death duties is about the only fun some of them seem to get out of it. If I had their money——"

There was a knock at the door.

"Please, sir, your brother Silas is below."

The two looked at each other with some dismay.

"More trouble," said Mrs. Linden, sadly.

Linden shrugged his shoulders. "All right, Susan!" he cried. "Tell him I'll be down. Now, dear, you keep him going and I'll be with you in a quarter of an hour."

IN less time than he named he was down in the front room—his consulting-room—where his wife was evidently having some difficulty in making agreeable conversation with their visitor. He was a big heavy man, not unlike his elder brother, but with all the genial chubbiness of the medium coarsened into pure brutality. He had the same pile of curly hair, but he was clean-shaven, with a heavy obstinate jowl. He sat by the window with his huge freckled hands upon his knees. A very important part of Mr. Silas Linden lay in those hands,

for he had been a formidable professional boxer, and at one time was fancied for the welter-weight honours of England. Now, as his stained tweed suit and frayed boots made clear, he had fallen on evil days, which he endeavoured to mitigate by cadging on his brother.

"Mornin', Tom," he said, in a husky voice. Then, as the wife left the room, "Got a drop of Scotch about? I've a head on me this morning. I met some of the old set last night down at 'The Admiral Vernon.' Quite a reunion it was—chaps I hadn't seen since my best ring days."

"Sorry, Silas," said the medium, seating himself behind his desk. "I keep nothing in the house."

"Spirits enough, but not the right sort," said Silas. "Well, the price of a drink will do as well. If you've got a Bradbury about you I could do with it, for there's nothing coming my way."

Tom Linden took a pound from his desk.

"Here you are, Silas. So long as I have any you have your share. But you had two pounds last week. Is it gone?"

"Gone! I should say so!" He put the note in his pocket. "Now, look here, Tom, I want to speak to you very serious as between man and man."

"Yes, Silas, what is it?"

"You see that?" He pointed to a lump on the back of his hand. "That's a bone! See? It will never be right. It was when I hit Curly Jenkins third round and outed him at the N.S.C. I outed myself for life that night. I can put up a show fight and exhibition bout, but I'm done for the real thing. My right has gone west."

"It's a hard case, Silas."

"Damned hard! But that's neither here nor there. What matters is that I've got to pick up a living, and I want to know how to do it. An old scrapper don't find many openings. Chucker-out at a pub with free drinks. Nothing doing there. What I want to know, Tom, is what's the matter with my becoming a medium?"

"A medium?"

"Why the devil should you stare at me? If it's good enough for you it's good enough for me."

"But you are *not* a medium."

"Oh, come. Keep that for the newspapers. It's all in the family, and between you an' me how d'ye do it?"

"I don't do it. I do nothing."

"And get four or five quid a week for it. That's a good yarn. Now you can't fool me, Tom. I'm not one o' those duds that pay you a thick 'un for an hour in the dark. We're on the square, you an' me. How d'ye do it?"

"Do what?"

"Well, them raps, for example. I've seen you sit there at your desk, as it might be, and raps come answerin' questions over yonder on the bookshelf. It's damned clever—fair puzzles 'em every time. How d'ye get them?"

"I tell you I don't. It's outside myself."

"Rats! You can tell me, Tom. I'm Griffiths, the safe man. It would set me up for life if I could do it."

For the second time in one morning the medium's Welsh strain took control.

"You're an impudent, blasphemous rascal, Silas Linden. It's men like you who come into our movement and give it a bad name. You should know me better than to think that I am a cheat. Get out of my house, you ungrateful rascal!"

"Not too much of your lip," growled the ruffian.

"Out you go, or I'll put you out, brother or no brother."

Silas doubled his great fists and looked ugly for a moment. Then the anticipation of favours to come softened his mood.

"Well, well, no harm meant," he growled, as he made for the door. "I expect I can make a shot at it without your help." His grievance suddenly overcame his prudence as he stood in the doorway. "You damned, canting, hypocritical box-of-tricks. I'll be even with you yet."

The heavy door slammed behind him.

MRS. LINDEN had run in to her husband.

"The 'ulking blackguard!" she cried. "I 'eard 'im. What did 'e want?"

"Wanted me to put him wise to mediumship. Thinks it's a trick of some sort that I could teach him."

"The foolish lump! Well, it's a good thing, for he won't dare show his face here again."

"Oh, won't he?"

"If he does I'll slap it for him. To think of his upsettin' you like this. Why, you're shakin' all over."

"I suppose I wouldn't be a medium if I wasn't high-strung. Someone said we were poets, only more so. But it's bad just when work is beginning."

"I'll give you healing."

She put her little work-worn hands over his high forehead and held them there in silence.

"That's better," said he. "Well done, Mary. I'll have a cigarette in the kitchen. That will finish it."

"No; there's someone here." She had looked out of the window. "Are you fit to see her? It's a woman."

"Yes, yes. I am all right now. Show her in."

An instant later a woman entered, a pale,

tragic figure in black, whose appearance told its own tale. Linden motioned her to a chair away from the light. Then he looked through his papers.

"You are Mrs. Blount, are you not? You had an appointment."

"Yes. I wanted to ask——"

"Please ask me nothing. It confuses me."

He was looking at her with the medium's gaze in his light grey eyes—that gaze which looks round and through a thing rather than at it.

"You have been wise to come, very wise. There is someone beside you who has an urgent message which could not be delayed. I get a name . . . Francis . . . yes, Francis."

The woman clasped her hands.

"Yes, yes, it is the name."

"A dark man, very sad, very earnest—oh, so earnest. He will speak. He must speak! It is urgent. He says, 'Tink-a-bell.' Who is Tink-a-bell?"

"Yes, yes; he called me so. Oh, Frank, Frank, speak to me! Speak!"

"He is speaking. His hand is on your head. 'Tink-a-bell,' he says, 'if you do what you purpose doing it will make a gap that it will take many years to cross.' Does that mean anything?"

She sprang from her chair. "It means everything. Oh, Mr. Linden, this was my last chance. If this had failed—if I found that I had really lost him I meant to go and seek him. I would have taken poison this night."

"Thank God that I have saved you. It is a terrible thing, madam, to take one's life. It breaks the law of Nature, and Nature's laws cannot be broken without punishment. I rejoice that he has been able to save you. He has more to say to you. His message is, 'If you will live and do your duty I will for ever be by your side, far closer to you than ever I was in life. My presence will surround and guard both you and our three babes.'"

It was marvellous, the change! The pale, worn woman who had entered the room was now standing with flushed cheeks and smiling lips. It is true that tears were pouring down her face, but they were tears of joy. She clapped her hands. She made little convulsive movements as if she would dance.

"He's not dead! He's not dead! How can he be dead if he can speak to me and be closer to me than ever? Oh! it's glorious! Oh, Mr. Linden, what can I do for you? You have saved me from shameful death! You have restored my husband to me! Oh! what a Godlike power you have!"

The medium was an emotional man and his own tears were moist upon his cheeks.

"My dear lady, say no more. It is not I. I do nothing. You can thank God, Who in His mercy permits some of His mortals to discern a spirit or to carry a message. Well, well, a guinea is my fee, if you can afford it. Come back to me if ever you are in trouble."

"I am content now," she cried, drying her eyes, "to await God's will and to do my duty in the world until such time as it shall be ordained that we unite once more."

THE widow left the house walking on air. Tom Linden also felt that the clouds left by his brother's visit had been blown away by this joyful incident, for there is no happiness like giving happiness and seeing the beneficent workings of one's own power. He had hardly settled down in his chair, however, before another client was ushered in. This time it was a smartly-dressed, white-spatted, frock-coated man of the world, with a bustling air as of one to whom minutes are precious.

"Mr. Linden, I believe? I have heard, sir, of your powers. I am told that by handling an object you can often get some clue as to the person who owned it?"

"It happens sometimes. I cannot command it."

"I should like to test you. I have a letter here which I received this morning. Would you try your powers upon that?"

The medium took the folded letter, and, leaning back in his chair, he pressed it upon his forehead. He sat with his eyes closed for a minute or more. Then he returned the paper.

"I don't like it," he said. "I get a feeling of evil. I see a man dressed all in white. He has a dark face. He writes at a bamboo table. I get a sensation of heat. The letter is from the tropics."

"Yes, from Central America."

"I can tell you no more."

"Are the spirits so limited? I thought they knew everything."

"They do not know everything. Their power and knowledge are as closely limited as ours. But this is not a matter for the spirit people. What I did then was psychometry, which, so far as we know, is a power of the human soul."

"Well, you are right as far as you have gone. This man, my correspondent, wants me to put up the money for the half-share in an oil-boring. Shall I do it?"

Tom Linden shook his head.

"These powers are given to some of us, sir, for the consolation of humanity and for a proof of immortality. They were never meant for worldly use. Trouble always comes of such use, trouble to the medium and trouble to the client. I will not go into the matter."

"Money's no object," said the man, drawing a wallet from his inner pocket.

"No, sir, nor to me. I am poor, but I have never ill-used my gift."

"A fat lot of use the gift is, then!" said the visitor, rising from his chair. "I can get all the rest from the parsons who are licensed, and you are not. There is your guinea, but I have not had the worth of it."

"I am sorry, sir, but I cannot break a rule. There is a lady beside you—near your left shoulder—an elderly lady——"

"Tut! tut!" said the financier, turning towards the door.

"She wears a large gold locket, with an emerald cross upon her breast."

The man stopped, turned, and stared.

"Where did you pick that up?"

"I see it before me now."

"Why, dash it, man, that was what my mother always wore! D'you tell me you can see her?"

"No; she is gone."

"What was she like? What was she doing?"

"She *was* your mother. She said so. She was weeping."

"Weeping! My mother! Why, she is in heaven if ever a woman was. They don't weep in heaven!"

"Not in the imaginary heaven. They do in the real heaven. It is only we who ever make them weep. She left a message."

"Give it me!"

"The message was: 'Oh, Jack! Jack! you are drifting ever farther from my reach.'"

The man made a contemptuous gesture.

"I was a damned fool to let you have my name when I made the appointment. You have been making inquiries. You don't take me in with your tricks. I've had enough of it—more than enough!"

For the second time that morning the door was slammed by an angry visitor.

"He didn't like his message," Linden explained to his wife. "It was his poor mother. She is fretting over him. Lord! if folk only knew these things it would do them more good than all the forms and ceremonies."

"Well, Tom, it's not your fault if they don't," his wife answered. "There are two women waiting to see you. They have not an introduction, but they seem in great trouble."

"I've a bit of a headache. I haven't got over last night. Silas and I are the same in that. Our night's work finds us out next morning. I'll just take these and no more, for it is bad to send anyone sorrowin' away if one can help it."

THE two women were shown in, both of them austere figures dressed in black, one a stern-looking person of fifty, the other about half that age.

"I believe your fee is a guinea," said the elder, putting that sum upon the table.

"To those who can afford it," Linden answered. As a matter of fact, the guinea often went the other way.

"Oh, yes, I can afford it," said the woman. "I am in sad trouble, and they told me maybe you could help me."

"Well, I will if I can. That's what I am for."

"I lost my poor husband in the war—killed at Ypres he was. Could I get in touch with him?"

"You don't seem to bring any influence with you. I get no impression. I am sorry, but we can't command these things. I get the name Edmund. Was that his name?"

"No."

"Or Albert?"

"No."

"I am sorry, but it seems confused—cross vibrations, perhaps, and a mix-up of messages like crossed telegraph wires."

"Does the name Pedro help you?"

"Pedro! Pedro! No, I get nothing. Was Pedro an elderly man?"

"No, not elderly."

"I can get no impression."

"It was about this girl of mine that I really wanted advice. My husband would have told me what to do. She has got engaged to a young man, a fitter by trade, but there are one or two things against it, and I want to know what to do."

"Do give us some advice," said the young woman, looking at the medium with a pleading eye.

"I would if I could, my dear. Do you love this man?"

"Oh, yes, he's all right."

"Well, if you don't feel more than that about him, I should leave him alone. Nothing but unhappiness comes of such a marriage."

"Then you see unhappiness waiting for her?"

"I see a good chance of it. I think she should be careful."

"Do you see anyone else coming along?"

"Everyone, man or woman, meets their mate sometime somewhere."

"Then she will get a mate?"

"Most certainly she will."

"I wonder if I should have any family?" asked the girl.

"Nay, that's more than I can say."

"And money—will she have money? We are downhearted, Mr. Linden, and we want a little——"

At this moment there came a most surprising interruption. The door flew open

Mrs. Linden rushed into the room with blazing eyes. "They are policewomen, Tom. I've had a warning about them."

and little Mrs. Linden rushed into the room with pale face and blazing eyes.

"They are policewomen, Tom. I've had a warning about them. It's only just come. Get out of this house, you pair of snivelling hypocrites. Oh, what a fool! What a fool I was not to recognize what you were!"

The two women had risen.

"Yes, you are rather late, Mrs. Linden," said the senior. "The money has passed."

"Take it back! Take it back! It's on the table."

"No, no, the money has passed. We have had our fortune told. You will hear more of this, Mr. Linden."

"You brace of frauds! You talk of frauds when it is you who are the frauds all the time! He would not have seen you if it had not been for compassion."

"It is no use scolding us," the woman answered. "We do our duty, and we did not make the law. So long as it is on the Statute Book we have to enforce it. We must report the case at headquarters."

Tom Linden seemed stunned by the blow, but when the policewomen had disappeared

he put his arms round his weeping wife and consoled her as best he might.

"The typist at the police office sent down the warning," she said. "Oh, Tom, it is the second time!" she cried. "It means jail and hard labour for you."

"Well, dear, so long as we are conscious of having done no wrong and of having done God's work to the best of our power, we must take what comes with a good heart."

"But where were they? How could they let you down so? Where was your guide?"

"Yes, Victor," said Tom Linden, shaking his head at the air above him, "where were you? I've got a crow to pick with you. You know, dear," he added, "just as a doctor can never treat his own case, a medium is very helpless when things come to his own address. That's the law. And yet I should have known. I was feeling in the dark. I had no inspiration of any sort. It was just a foolish pity and sympathy that led me on when I had no sort of a real message. Well, dear Mary, we will take what's coming to us with a brave heart. Maybe they have not enough to make a case, and maybe the beak is not as ignorant as most of them. We'll hope for the best."

In spite of his brave words the medium was shaking and quivering at the shock. His wife had put her hands upon him and was endeavouring to steady him, when Susan, the maid, who knew nothing of the trouble, admitted a fresh visitor into the room. It was none other than Edward Malone.

"He can't see you," said Mrs. Linden; "the medium is ill. He will see no one this morning."

But Linden had recognized his visitor.

"This is Mr. Malone, my dear, of *The Daily Gazette*. He was with us last night. We had a good sitting, had we not, sir?"

"Marvellous!" said Malone. "But what is amiss?"

Both husband and wife poured out their sorrows.

"What a dirty business!" cried Malone, with disgust. "I am sure the public does not realize how this law is enforced, or there would be a row. This *agent-provocateur* business is quite foreign to British justice. But in any case, Linden, you are a *real*

medium. The law was made to suppress false ones."

"There are no real mediums in British law," said Linden, ruefully. "I expect the more real you are, the greater the offence. If you are a medium at all and take money you are liable. But how can a medium live if he does not take money? It's a man's whole work and needs all his strength. You can't be a carpenter all day and a first-class medium in the evening."

"What a wicked law! It seems to be deliberately stifling all physical proofs of spiritual power."

"Yes, that is just what it is. If the Devil passed a law it would be just that. It is supposed to be for the protection of the public, and yet no member of the public has ever been known to complain. Every case is a police trap. And yet the police know as well as you or I that every church or charity garden-party has got its clairvoyante or its fortune-teller."

"It does seem monstrous. What will happen now?"

"I expect a summons will come along. Then a police-court case. Then fine or imprisonment. It's the second time, you see."

"Well, your friends will give evidence for you, and we will have a good man to defend you."

Linden shrugged his shoulders.

"You never know who are your friends. They slip away like water when it comes to the pinch."

"Well, I won't, for one," said Malone, heartily. "Keep me in touch with what is going on. But I called because I had something to ask you."

"I am sorry, but I am really not fit." Linden held out a quivering hand.

"No, no, nothing psychic. I simply wanted to ask you whether the presence of a strong sceptic would stop all your phenomena."

"Not necessarily. But, of course, it makes everything more difficult. If they will be quiet and reasonable we can get results. But they know nothing, break every law, and ruin their own sittings. There was old Sherbank, the doctor, the other day. When the raps came on the table he jumped up, put his hand on the wall, and cried, 'Now, then, put a rap on the palm of my hand within five seconds.' Because he did not get it he declared it was all humbug and stamped out of the room. They will not admit that there are fixed laws in this as in everything else."

"Well, I must confess that the man I am thinking of might be quite as unreasonable. It is the great Professor Challenger."

"Oh, yes, I've heard he is a hard case."

"Would you give him a sitting?"

"Yes, if you desired it."

"He won't come to you or to any place you name. He imagines all sorts of wires and contrivances. You would have to come down to his country house."

"I would not refuse if it might convert him."

"And when?"

"I can do nothing until this horrible affair is over. It will take a month or two."

"Well, I will keep in touch with you till then. When all is well again we shall make our plans and see if we can bring these facts before him as they have been brought before me. Meanwhile, let me say how much I sympathize. We will form a committee of your friends, and all that can will surely be done."

(To be continued.)

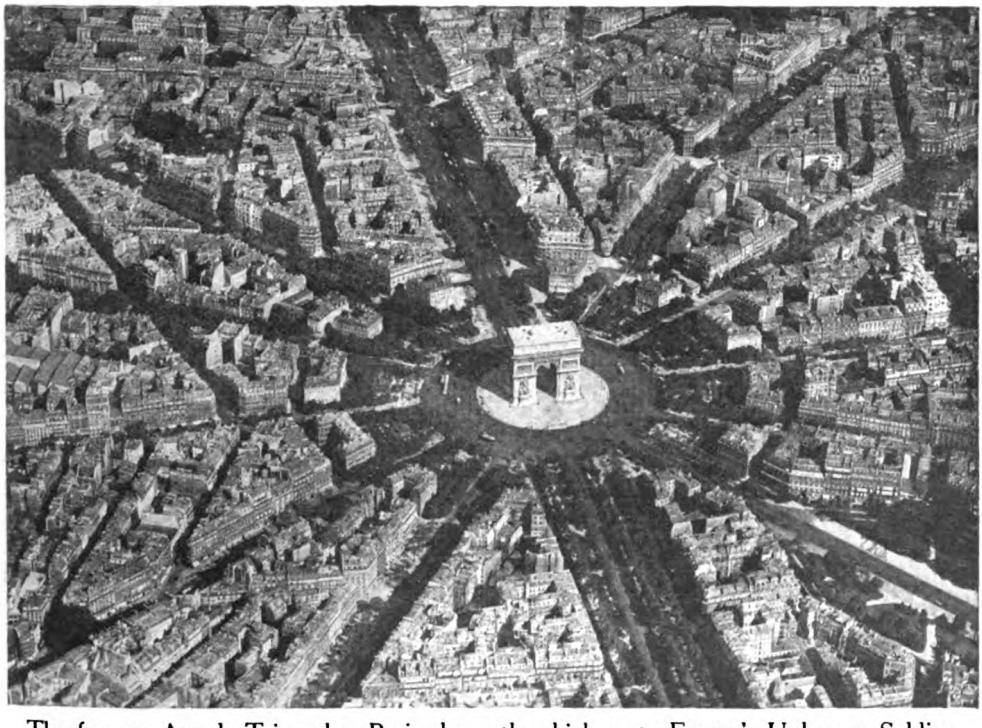
LOOKING DOWN ON EUROPE

THE THRILLS AND ADVANTAGES OF SIGHT-SEEING BY AEROPLANE, AS DEMONSTRATED ON A 6,500-MILE TOUR

By Lieut. J. Parker Van Zandt

IT was my good fortune recently to travel as a passenger some six thousand five hundred miles over Europe on English, French, Rumanian, Polish, German, and Dutch air lines. My eventful journey started at Croydon, on the outskirts of London, and it is one of the boasts of the Croydon aerodrome that its customs officers are as expeditious and efficient in their sphere as is the aircraft itself in its own element. I soon found myself comfortably installed in the seat of honour beside the pilot in the nose of the *Princess Mary*, the two Rolls-Royce engines close behind me on either side, under half-throttle, humming tranquilly their message of latent power.

One is scarcely conscious of the actual moment of leaving the ground until the absence of further jolting and the slight billowing effect, as the wings cushion in



The famous Arc de Triomphe, Paris, beneath which rests France's Unknown Soldier.

Photo. Compagnie Aérienne Française.

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the warm air, make one realize with a peculiar thrill that he is off at last on his great adventure.

The emotion of cross-country flight must be experienced to be appreciated. Like the taste of fresh olives, it defies description. There is a sense of exhilaration and freedom invoked by the spectacle of green hills and dales streaming rapidly away beneath, as one floats above with little realization of his own motion, save the knowledge that the chequered farm land just below in a brief space of time will be fading into an indistinct horizon far behind.

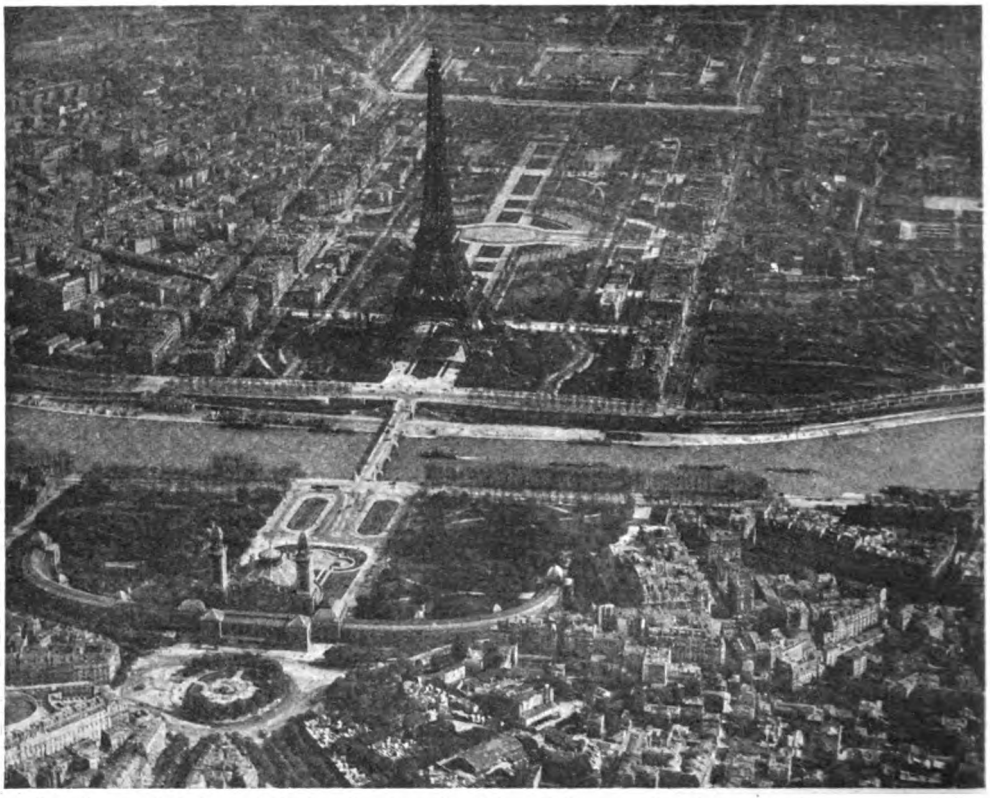
The white ribbon of the road curved over the hilltop and down the valley, beckoning us to follow, while the ever-changing and widening vista of the English countryside held the attention enthralled. To be truly appreciated, England must be seen from above—" her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day."

It has been said that an English summer consists of two days of sunshine and a thunderstorm, but our weather could not have been more ideal. The air was clear and warm as we neared the coast, and from an altitude of fifteen hundred feet we could trace the grey waters of the Channel far to the north toward the Hook of Holland, and south to where the water and the distant haze converged on an unreal horizon.

The rays from the afternoon sun threw a shadow of the 'plane on the earth below—a grotesque, miniature shadow that slipped silently over hedge and ploughman and cottage, streaked across a field of yellow grain at the Channel's edge, slid precipitously down the chalky cliff, and without an instant's pause plunged out across the water.

We took twenty-two minutes from Folkestone to Boulogne, twenty-two glorious minutes! The clean, white sand of Le Touquet beach (Paris-Plage) lay beneath us as we swung inland.

Seemingly far ahead against the horizon hung an ominous bank of cumulus clouds,



Another aerial view of Paris, showing the River Seine running between the outstretched wings of the Trocadéro and the Eiffel Tower.

Photo. Compagnie Aérienne Française.

their flat tops in brilliant sunshine, while below the soft outlines of the open fields were submerged in shadow.

With a sudden rush, the green fields far below were blotted out of sight, and a damp, grey mist enveloped us, a sense of floating in some dimly lit, enormous ocean cavern—then abruptly into brilliant sunshine again, while just beneath our wings, looking for all the world like a fresh-fallen field of snow, stretched the great mesa land of clouds.

The wind-scattered edges of the cloud bank faded behind us as the Cathedral of Beauvais came into view, casting long shadows in the fading light. Then Paris under a twilight glow, a tangle of red mansard roofs in the distance, with the Eiffel Tower and Sacré Cœur standing sentinel against the crimson sky.

NOT many evenings later I boarded a night train at the Quai d'Orsay bound for southern France. The lights of the French capital were still glowing in the sky as I tumbled promptly into bed preparatory for an early rise in the morning.

We were late rolling into Toulouse, the northern terminus of the French air line to Morocco, and although it was scarcely light, the local aerodrome manager was at the Gare du Midi awaiting us. A Breguet biplane was on the cement mat before the long row of hangars, its Renault engine idling, and I scrambled into the rear open cockpit as the pilot began to taxi slowly away from the buildings. An answering roar from the engine as the throttle was advanced, wheels ploughing through the deep dew-laden grass, tail poised for flight—and I was off on what was destined to prove my most memorable air ride in Europe.

A wide turn over Toulouse, the street lights glowing dully through the ground mist. In the half-light of early morning the earth appeared dark and cold, and the crisp, clean rush of air past my uncovered cockpit made me thankful for the warm flying suit I had borrowed from a friendly mechanic.

The gentle valley of the Garonne lay sleeping under a fleecy sheet of light fog, the apparent complete suspension of life evoking in some peculiar way a sense of special virtue in our own animation.

Like a child's ribbon, the canal lay curled at the base of the furrowed hills, a solemn double row of poplars guarding its banks. The black thread of the railroad now ran close beside it, now struck out boldly across the rich farm land toward where the

"The walled city of Carcassonne slips by, sharply etched in light and shadow."

Photo. Compagnie Aérienne Française.

valley narrowed before the encroaching Pyrénées.

A greyish mist across the narrow corridor warned us to descend to a lower altitude. The whistle of the flying wires rose to a shrill pitch as we gathered momentum in the downward glide. Wisps of damp cloud flung by, and then a sudden opaqueness, as we plunged with noiseless impact into the threatening cloud ahead.

Things certainly looked unpromising. The crests of the hills crowding in on both sides were hidden in cloud, and the red-tiled roofs and yellow haystacks loomed up uncomfortably near, as we cautiously pursued the contour of the valley bed, marked by the canal.

Pang! A drop of rain strikes my forehead and smarts like a hailstone. The damp, chill air penetrates through the flying suit and the lowering cloud just overhead shuts out the morning light.

A half-hour passes. We dodge through a winding pass ahead, swing to the east again, and abruptly there opens before us a glorious picture of the breaking day. Still in shadowland, as from the mouth of a giant cavern we gaze out under the black wedge of the storm lifted above us into the golden, sunlit country beyond.

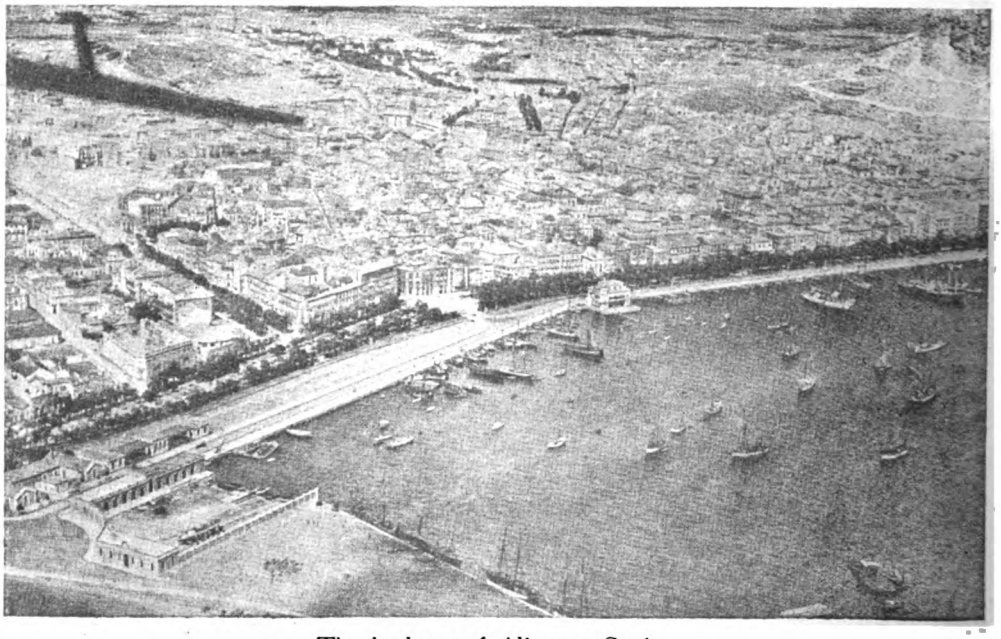
Through some momentary, drifting cloud the low-lying sun sends forth long bars of alternate light and shade, like giant chariot spokes, as if to guide us in our eastward flight; and the whole countryside lies floating under a rising mist that covers the land with a transparent lavender veil. Such a glorious moment's careless rapture is worth "an age without a name."

The walled city of Carcassonne slips by, sharply etched in light and shadow, and the glistening waters of the Mediterranean appear ahead. As we swing by the eastern slopes of the Pyrénées, the clouds that had seemed so black and ominous overhead now appear snow-white, soft, vaporous, streaming south.

It is noon and we are approaching Alicante, six thousand feet above a tangle of rocky slopes bordering the sea. Sun-baked white huts cling precariously to the ridges. Terraces, burnt dry, struggle up the hillsides. On our right the mountains rise sharply pointed, precipitous, gullies and pockets in their bare sides, patches of rough cultivation on their lower slopes. Dried river beds lie parched in the heat of the summer sun.

On our left the great bowl of the Mediterranean, green to deep indigo-blue along the rocky shore line, silver-grey on the shimmering horizon; a few toy fishing boats motionless on its placid surface.

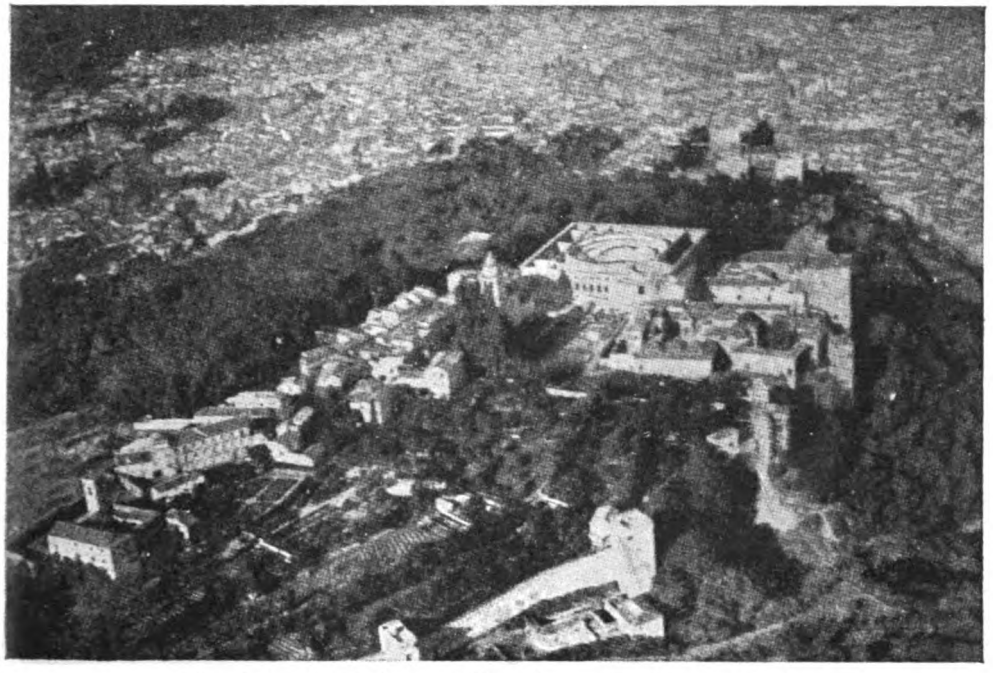
Barcelona, with its beautiful park, its



The harbour of Alicante, Spain.

"This is Spain, dry, sunburnt Spain, whose brown hills and relentless heat have burned themselves so indelibly into Spanish character. What a contrast with the cool green aerodrome at Toulouse a few hours earlier!"

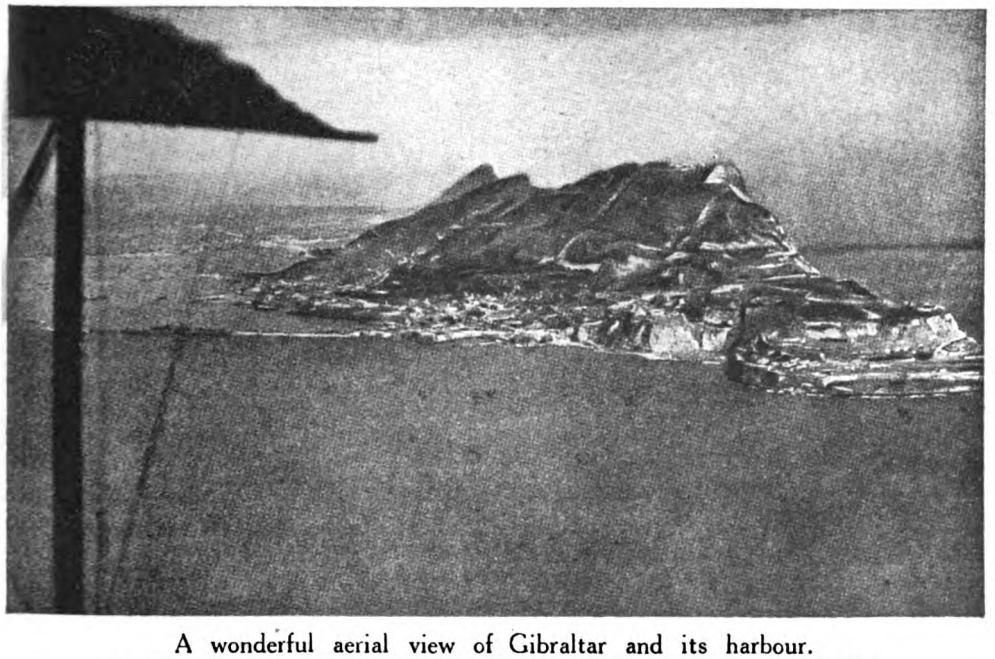
Photo. Flandrin.



The Alhambra Palace at Granada as an airman sees it.

The famous Palace, one of the priceless contributions of the Moors to European architecture, is to the right of the arena-like structure in the centre.

Photo. Flandrin.



A wonderful aerial view of Gibraltar and its harbour.

One wing of the aeroplane from which this photograph was taken is visible on the left.

Photo. Flandrin.

monumental bull-ring, its uncompleted Cathedral, is three hours behind us. This is Spain, dry, sunburnt Spain, whose brown hills and relentless heat have burned themselves so indelibly into Spanish character. Valencia and its fertile valley lie forgotten to the rear.

At our feet is Alicante, choking under a dense blanket of dust stirred up by the unbidden sirocco. The sirocco is as unwelcome in Spain as is the mistral in southern France.

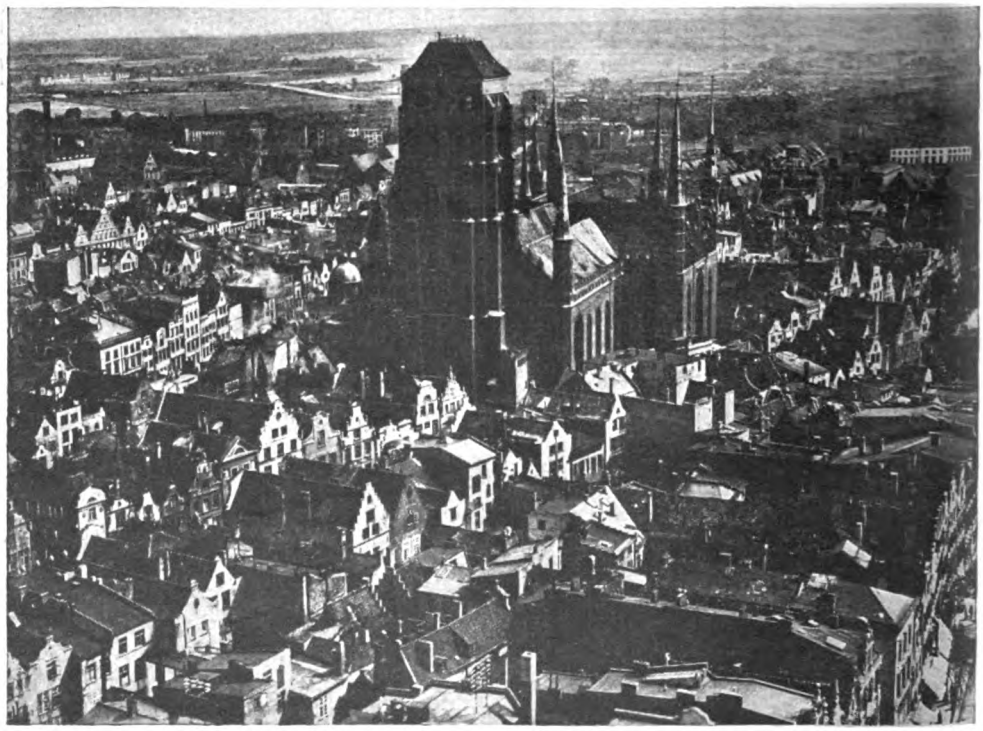
We leave our cool height and glide down slowly, skim over a fence of rough-piled stones, and settle to the earth, kicking up a great cloud of yellow dust behind us, as we taxi to the hangar. What a contrast with the cool green aerodrome at Toulouse a few hours earlier! Here the barren, sandy ground seems to seethe in heat and the air is thick with suspended dust.

When we re-start, the hot wind off the bare hills clutches at the 'plane and tosses it angrily about, until we pass suddenly into the cool stratum above and make smoothly for the distant peaks of the Sierra Nevada, far to the south.

A snow-clad peak appears, dimly visible above its companions upon the horizon; two hours, and it has passed beneath us and lies indistinguishable among its neighbours, now far to the rear. Thus does air travel obliterate ancient barriers. Tiny white villages, like clustering flights of egrets, begin to dot the great brown slope rising up from the shore.

A valley opens out and Málaga appears, a welcome sight after four hours. It is hot on the ground, and tropical palms, their fronds grey with dust, border the field. Up this valley a brief, cool half-hour by air—and most of a disagreeable day by Spanish train—lies Alhambra Palace on its wooded hill, Granada at its feet; and sometimes, when the wind is right, the pilot lays his course that way, deserting the shore line for the inland route.

But such was not our good fortune. In ten minutes we have transferred to a new 'plane, and with another pilot are off down the coast, the lower contours flattening out as we rise above them.



"The red-tiled roofs and narrow streets of Danzig lie beneath us, the massive Church of St. Mary towering above its neighbours."

Photo. Süddeutscher Aero Lloyd.

Here at last the long Spanish coast ends at the Strait of Gibraltar, and for a time we leave Europe behind us. The wind sweeps through the narrow strait, scattering sudden flashes of white foam in the Medi-

terranean blue, like fireflies against a twilight sky, while beyond lies Ceuta on the Moorish coast, with the highest peak of its headland, the African "Pillar of Hercules," standing out menacing, portentous.

clouds on the horizon, in grey mist and secret splashes of fire; and the red cliffs across "The Father of Glittering" are reflected like a flame in the river.

In the closing hour of the day we start

This view of Berlin shows (in the centre) the Column of Victory erected in 1873, with the statue of Bismarck in the foreground, while on the right a portion of the Parliament buildings is shown.

Photo. Aerofilms, Ltd.

The international port of Tangier beneath our wings, white, flat-roofed houses rising above each other in tiers of cubes, a solitary minaret jutting into the air, a grey line marking the trace of ancient battlements, Portuguese or English.

Our pilot descends to a few hundred feet above the Bled, the Moroccan veldt, where it is surprisingly cooler. The white-dovelike glitter of an Arab town appears by the blue rim of the Atlantic, the plunging breakers crashing soundlessly at its feet. Forlorn processions of camels move along the dusty trails; an astonished Moor, wrapped in loose, voluminous robes, looks up from his ambling mule.

Then Salé (Salli) of a dazzling whiteness, ancient home of the "Sally Rovers," and Rabat-el-Fath, the Imperial City, on the banks of the Bu Regreg, winding down to meet the blue of the ocean under high cliffs, through a brown-velvet valley.

As we glide down over the Residency, the sun slips at last behind the low, banked

for our final hop. The blinding light of the afternoon has given way to a velvet softness.

Roused by the roar of our engine, great storks rise leisurely before us and wing their way across a marsh, a study in black and white. At a bare one hundred feet of altitude, we skim over a low stone wall, behind which an imperturbable, worm-eaten camel stalks languidly round and round a water-wheel. Here are the squalor and simplicity of primitive life in a land burnt dry by an African sun.

The pilot dips down suddenly to a few feet above the broad Atlantic beach, and, with wheels almost touching the sand, we skim south, dunes flying by our wing tip, the pungent salt air of the crashing waves filling our nostrils. Thus we rush suddenly upon Casablanca, zooming up over the artificial harbour, across the white and yellow houses and ochre-tinted towers, and come at length to rest beside a military camp.

Here is the age-old, immemorial life of

the East, a page out of the thousand and second tale of Scheherazade. Yet this very morning, a brief fifteen hours before, I was one thousand two hundred miles to the north, across the length of Spain, engulfed in the tumult of a European city. By the hazard of travel, the contrasts of a score of centuries have been compressed into these fifteen hours; three civilizations passed in review, made luminous and dramatized from the strategic crow's nest of flight.

THERE were eight of us who sat in the crowded bus of the "Compagnie Franco-Roumaine de Navigation Aérienne" on an early August morning, as it pulled up the long hill out of Prague to the military aerodrome on the plain commanding the Vltava (Moldau) Valley. Of my travelling companions one was a Frenchman *en route*, as I, from Paris to Bucharest; the rest were Americans destined for Vienna.

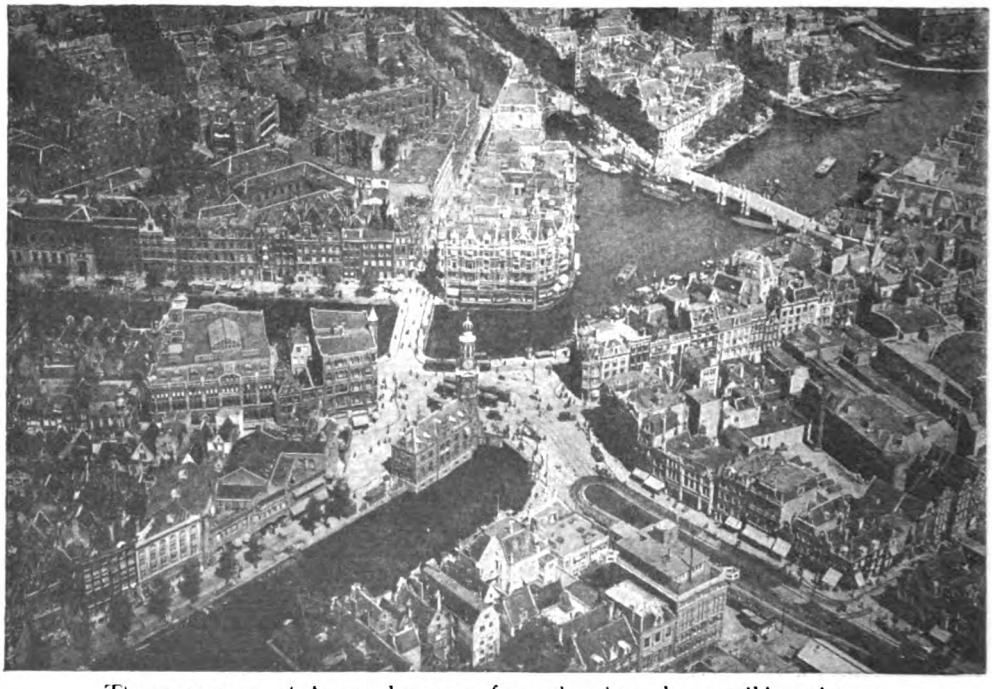
Two days before I had come from Paris in a Spad 'plane with a Czecho-Slovakian for company, and several hundred pounds of silks and perfumes bound for the Balkan capitals. For four hours on that trip we had flown across German territory, where a forced landing would have resulted in the confiscation of the 'plane and goods and the pilot doubtless thrown into jail.

By dint of much well-intentioned French with the aerodrome manager, who sat beside me in the bus during the ride out to the aerodrome, I was successful in getting a good seat in the 'plane allotted to me, so that a short half-hour later, when we swept across the field and out over the Vltava Valley, I had the advantage of a vision of the surrounding country as unrestricted as that of the pilot close by my side.

One hundred and eighty-five miles across some of the most fertile farm land in Central Europe lay Vienna. In less than two hours we were there—two golden hours crowded with a kaleidoscopic succession of scenes and vistas that not even the master brush of a Corot could rival. If the long flight across Spain to Africa was the most spectacular, surely this all-too-brief trip across Bohemia was the most charming of my aerial travels in Europe.

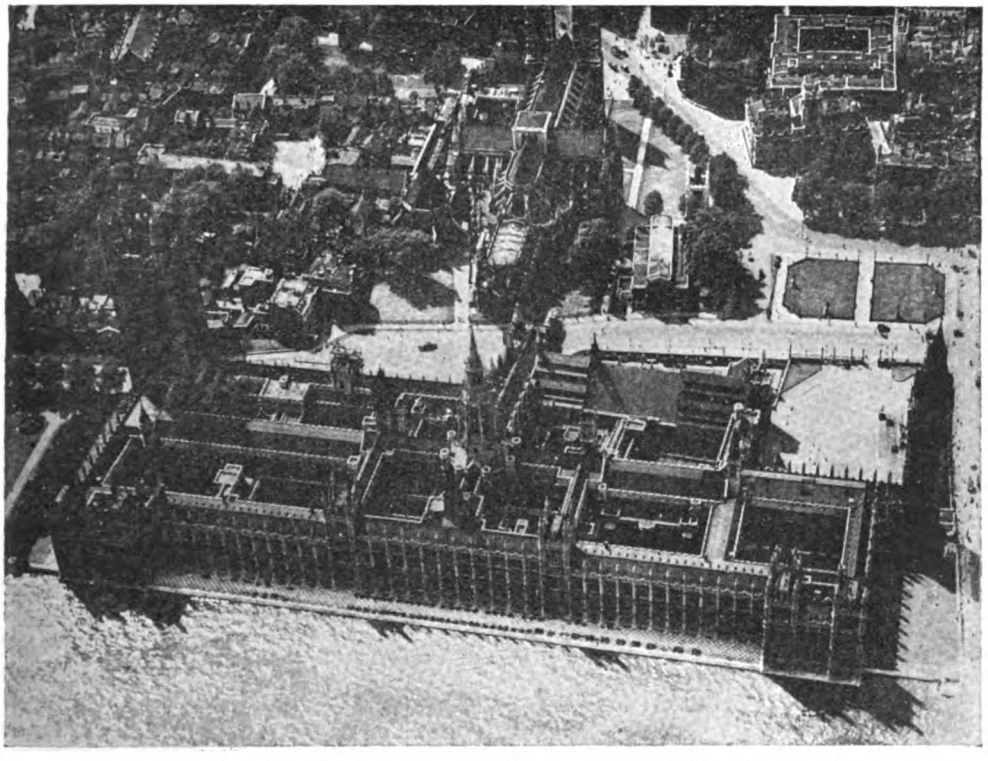
Overhead, a flawless blue sky, like the image of a serene conscience; below, a marvellous mosaic of cultivated farms in all the ravishing colours of the harvest season. And such an infinite variety of patterns!

With real regret I saw ahead the glistening Danube winding off through heavy woods towards Bavaria; then the pilot was calling my attention to a castle just below us. It was the famous castle of Kreuzenstein, set upon a knoll dominating the neighbouring countryside, its moat now velvet-green,



The waterways of Amsterdam seen from the air make a striking picture.

Photo. Royal Dutch Air Service.



An unfamiliar view of the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.
Photo. Central Aerophoto Co.

its battlements upflung in seeming challenge to the indifference of a flying age—a proud symbol of a cruel and chivalrous past.

There came flooding back all my boyhood memories of many a stirring romance, and I was still lost in reverie when we glided down for a landing at the Aspern aerodrome.

In twenty minutes we were off with a new 'plane and pilot for Budapest.

With true French courtesy our pilot had thoughtfully prepared a scholarly type-written description of the route, which was mounted on the bulkhead before us, and, together with a roll map case with which we had been provided, it served to shorten the one hundred and fifty miles that separated us from the Hungarian capital.

It was past the lunch hour when we landed at Budapest, and we had but a scant quarter of an hour to fortify ourselves before taking off in a fresh 'plane for Belgrade.

A sudden severe jolting of the 'plane, followed by a painfully familiar sinking sensation, forced my attention to the fact that we were rapidly approaching a big rain squall. For some time the pilot had been gradually reducing his altitude, and, as we passed beneath the cloud rim, the level floor of the Hungarian plain lay but a few hundred feet below us, softened in the deep shadow of the storm. Fortunately, the squall was travelling our way and raced us along at one hundred and twenty miles an hour.

At Kiskunfelegyhaza we overtook the storm centre, an awe-inspiring spectacle of Nature's pent-up fury unleashed on a hapless town. The rain lashed the grey roofs below us and ran in torrents through the narrow streets. The black spiral core of the storm threw out wraith-like octopus arms that reached down to the wet, gleaming earth, and clutched at us in sinister fashion as we slipped by to the south. But in twenty minutes we were out of shadowland into sunlight once more, the tumbled thunderheads behind us now gloriously white, towering fifteen thousand feet into the sky.

Occasional flashes of silver far away to our right betrayed the sluggish Danube making lazily for the sea, and the placid, level fields beneath our wing reflected the eternal youth and purity of Nature after a thousand partial corruptions.

I let my eyes close on this tranquil scene, in involuntary relaxation from the tension of our turbulent passage through the

storm. The muffled roar of the engine beat less and less loudly on the drowsy senses, and when I awoke Pancsova aerodrome was rushing up to meet our wheels, with Belgrade at the wing tip across the shallow Danube.

Five hundred and fifty air miles now lay behind us, while still some two hundred and eighty miles to the east, beyond the frowning Transylvanian Alps, was our goal, the capital of Rumania. A strong wind at our upper altitude urged us forward, but it was already dusk when we crossed the deep-cut gorge at the Iron Gate and bade good-bye to the Danube at Turnu Severin, where it debouches upon the Wallachian plain.

Friendly lights rubbed at the tiny windows in dark wooded patches on the plain, a beacon flare winked eagerly from an emergency aerodrome below, inviting us to explore its welcome; then a dull glow against the sky, a checkerboard of myriad flashing signals, and Bucharest lay beneath our wing, a great searchlight spreading its yellow glare upon the Băneasa aerodrome.

That evening, through my window on the Calea Victoriei, there floated up the staccato music of hoof beats to the accompaniment of endlessly tinkling silver bells, as the youth of Rumania rode out behind the dark-robed Russian cabbies to mark the quiet stars.

SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY miles north-west of Bucharest, as the crow flies, lies Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia, near the shores of the Baltic Sea. An easy day's flight if one cares to make it so, but I chose the more leisurely way, revisiting the capitals that had been little more than glimpsed on the outbound journey, and thence by air *viâ* Warsaw to the quaint old city of Danzig, near the mouth of the broad Vistula.

After an enforced train journey from Danzig to Königsberg the journey back to Danzig by air was idyllic. It was early morning when we took off in a metal limousine 'plane, scudding before a following wind across the ivy-covered university where Kant once taught.

Where the Pregel empties into the landlocked finger bay of the Frisches Haff, the sun withdrew for a time behind a misty wall and "the hooded clouds, like friars, told their beads in drops of rain." A beautiful rainbow loop formed beneath us, thrown out, as it were, from our whirling propeller and curving upward to our opposite wing tip, like a magic golden ring, through which we sped above the sandy strip along the Baltic shore.

In an hour the red-tiled roofs and narrow streets of Danzig lie beneath us, the massive monument of the Church of St. Mary towering above its neighbours. We glided down for a landing at the Langfuhr municipal aerodrome, to await the connecting 'plane from Warsaw before pushing on to Berlin.

IT is September, and I am in London again, having flown over from Amsterdam this morning, across the dikes and tulip beds of Holland, with a company of Dutchmen in a monoplane, thus completing six thousand five hundred miles of looking down on Europe. Europe is big, but not so big that with such a vantage the mind cannot retain a vision of the whole line and contour of it—a vibrant, living picture.

One learns without conscious effort the geographical origin of so much of Europe's history; the inevitableness of misunderstanding and conflict where political lines have been flung recklessly across mountain and watercourse, now throttling an isolated valley, now barring an ancient people from their natural outlet to the sea.

There comes flooding back the vision of castellated battlements along the Danube bank; of castles nestling in the German hills; of châteaux, half hidden in poplars, stepped up like organ reeds against the warm colours of the French countryside; of ripening grain on the Moravian slopes under a late afternoon sun; and of the bold, free sweep of the Mediterranean, stretching out in tranquil beauty to an unreal horizon.

But the real, luminous beauty of Europe seen from above cannot be phrased. It is there, now happily within the reach of every arrant lover of living, this precious gift bestowed by flight. But the deeper wonder of it is of the nature of things which talk does not easily pursue; in the end it remains something incommunicable, irrational, and final.

The Weekes Case

By Denis Mackail

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

THE porter at Queen's Court Mansions was, like the majority of his profession, both cold-blooded and level-headed, and after he had telephoned for the doctor he left the service-valet in charge and took an omnibus down to the office of *The Evening Record*.

"Is it true," he asked the commissionaire, "that you pay for news about accidents and so forth? I mean, if it's something absolutely red-hot?"

The commissionaire scrutinized his visitor carefully and, detecting signs of the characteristics which we have mentioned, nodded his head.

"That's right," he said. "Fourth floor, and third door on the right."

So the porter went upstairs and made his statement to a young man in horn spectacles.

"There's a Mr. Thomas Weekes," he said, "been living at our mansions for the last six months or so. I took his newspapers in this morning as usual, and found him lying on the hearth-rug in his sitting-room. The gas-fire was on, and he was pretty badly burnt about the head."

"Dead?" asked the young man in horn spectacles.

"That's right," said the porter. "Soon as I sent for the doctor, I thought I'd step along and give you the news before anyone else got hold of it. See what I mean?"

"H'm!" said the young man. "Was it suicide?"

"A fit, more likely," said the porter. "A gentleman wouldn't hardly kill himself by roasting his face half off like that. What do I get for coming along and telling you? It's absolutely red-hot, you know."

The young man's immediate answer was to flutter the pages of half-a-dozen directories which were ranged on a shelf in the corner.

"Weekes," he said, presently. "He wasn't anyone in particular, was he?"

"Business gentleman, I believe," said the porter.

"Half a crown," said the young man.

"Oh, look 'ere," protested the porter. "Surely it's worth more than that. Why——"

"Standard rate," snapped the young man. "Take it or leave it. Sign form here, an' I'll give you chit for cashier."

The porter seemed to realize the uselessness of further argument. He completed the necessary formalities, drew his half-crown, and took another omnibus back to Queen's Court Mansions. The young man in horn spectacles scrawled the story on a piece of flimsy paper, headed it "Tragedy in West-End Flat," and pumped it through a pneumatic tube to the sub-editors' room. It was a slack morning in the newspaper world, and the paragraph was not only used, but given a prominent position on the front page.

At half-past twelve one of the big news agencies sent in a report of the failure of the Anglo-Peruvian Bank. The sub-editor to whom this came called up the financial editor on the house telephone.

"I say, old man," he said, "what's the Anglo-Peruvian Bank? Is it a big show?"

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"Never heard of it," answered the financial editor.

"Well," said his colleague, "it's bust."

"Oh!" replied the financial editor. "Half a jiffy, and I'll turn it up."

In a few moments he was back at the instrument.

"Dead?" asked the young man in horn spectacles. "That's you the news before anyone

"Registered less than a year ago," he reported. "A bucket-shop, I should say. Private company."

"Any names?" asked the sub-editor.

"Only one in my list," said the financial editor. "Chairman and managing director. Fellow called Weekes. Thomas Weekes."

"Spell it."

The financial editor spelt it.

"It's nothing to make a song about, though," he added. "Nothing to upset the markets."

"Widows' and orphans' savings, eh?" suggested his friend.

"That's the idea," said the financial editor, and with a merry laugh he replaced his receiver.

At the same moment an inky boy came into the sub-editors' room with a sheaf of the lunch edition, and dropped a copy on each desk. The particular sub-editor who had just been using the house telephone picked up his copy and ran a hurried and professional eye over it.

"Hullo!" he said. "Hullo-ullo!"

And this pregnant utterance may, so far as the general public were concerned, be said to have marked the real opening of the Weekes Case.

IN the bedroom at No. 12, Queen's Court Mansions, Dr. Carruthers and Superintendent Tomlin were engaged in private conversation.

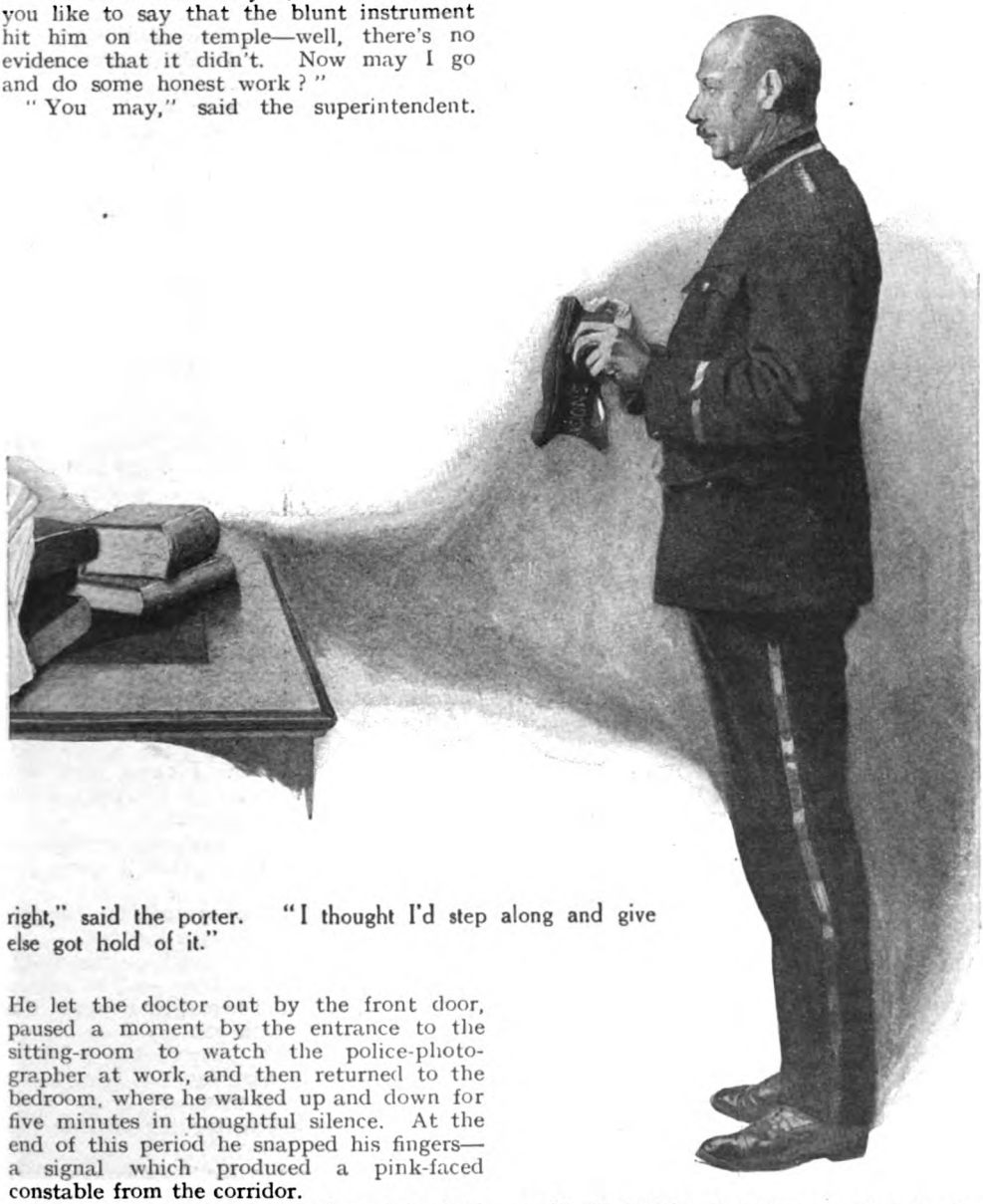
"At the present stage," said the doctor, "it might be anything. If he'd been very drunk, or taken suddenly faint, then it might be an accident. If someone had fetched him a crack on the temple, it might be murder. But he's too badly damaged for anyone to answer that question. As for suicide, I wouldn't rule that out until you've had an autopsy. He might have poisoned himself—or been poisoned."

"Thanks," said the superintendent. "The only thing you haven't mentioned is our old friend the 'blunt instrument.'"

The doctor smiled.

"I'll leave that to you," he said. "If you like to say that the blunt instrument hit him on the temple—well, there's no evidence that it didn't. Now may I go and do some honest work?"

"You may," said the superintendent.



right," said the porter. "I thought I'd step along and give else got hold of it."

He let the doctor out by the front door, paused a moment by the entrance to the sitting-room to watch the police-photographer at work, and then returned to the bedroom, where he walked up and down for five minutes in thoughtful silence. At the end of this period he snapped his fingers—a signal which produced a pink-faced constable from the corridor.

"The porter," said Superintendent Tomlin.

He questioned the porter patiently and carefully, ascertained that he had left the body exactly as he had found it, and noted that he was equipped with an alibi. According to Dr. Carruthers, death must have taken place not long before midnight, and the porter had gone off duty at nine o'clock. He had gone straight home—for he did not live on the premises—and a large family could all testify, if necessary, that he had stayed there until seven o'clock this morning.

"Right," said the superintendent. "Was Mr. Weekes a satisfactory tenant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have many visitors?"

"No, sir. This is a service flat, you see, sir. There's very little entertaining done here."

"Anybody come to see him last night?"

"Not while I was in the 'all, sir. But Mr.

Weekes had just engaged a new secretary, and——"

"That's all right," interrupted the superintendent. "I've seen him."

He snapped his fingers again.

"I'll take the service-valet now," he said, and the porter returned to his glass box in the vestibule.

THE service-valet—who proved to be a Swiss subject—had very little to contribute. He had looked after Mr. Weekes ever since he had come to Queen's Court Mansions, had always found him quite a pleasant gentleman, and had last seen him alive when he had put out his evening things—about seven o'clock, that would have been—on the previous evening.

"Did he seem at all worried in any way?" asked the superintendent.

"No, sir. Not that I noticed."

"H'm!" said the superintendent. And then: "Where do you sleep?"

"In the basement, sir."

"Room to yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have a pass-key to all the flats, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right," said the superintendent. "That'll do for the present."

Once more he paced the room in silence, and then he snapped his fingers a third time.

"Mr. Weekes's secretary still there?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the pink-faced constable.

"Ask him to come here for a moment." And then, as the secretary—a pale, clean-shaven young man—appeared in the doorway: "Now, then, Mr. Jeffries, if you can spare a minute to two——"

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Jeffries.

"Well, let's get your position clear. You say Mr. Weekes only engaged you at the beginning of this week. What had you been doing before that?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Jeffries. "I've been out of work."

"Eh?" said Superintendent Tomlin. "Speak up, please."

"I beg your pardon. I'm afraid I've got a bit of a sore throat. I said I'd been out of work."

"Oh," said the superintendent. "Ex-Service man?"

"Yes."

"Got your papers there?"

Mr. Jeffries produced a sheaf of well-worn documents, and handed them over.

"That's all right," said the superintendent, passing them back again. "And how did you hear of this job?"

"Mr. Weekes applied to the Labour Exchange. He picked me out because I knew shorthand."

"And what did you do for him?"

"I hadn't really done anything," said Mr. Jeffries. "Mr. Weekes wanted me to begin this morning."

"But you'd been to see him here?"

"Oh, yes. I saw him yesterday afternoon. He very kindly gave me some money to buy a new suit."

"The one you're wearing?"

"Yes."

"H'm!" said the superintendent. And he was apparently on the point of putting some further question, when the sound of voices in the corridor drew him to the doorway.

"What is it?" he snapped. "Who let that man into the flat?"

"Hullo, Mr. Tomlin," said the intruder, with an air of exaggerated geniality. "I'm from *The Evening Record*. Have you got a story for me?"

"I don't think so," said the superintendent.

"Well, perhaps I've got one for you," replied the intruder. "Did you know that Weekes ran the Anglo-Peruvian Bank, and that the shutters went up this morning? What'll you swap for that?"

A look of annoyance flashed across the superintendent's face, and he glanced back at the new secretary before he answered. Then he said:—

"I'll swap nothing. I came here this morning with a warrant for Weekes's arrest on a charge of embezzlement."

"Good for you!" said the newspaper man, enthusiastically. "Then I guess it's suicide. Eh?"

"It's *sub judice*," answered Mr. Tomlin. "You'd better wait for the inquest."

The newspaper man laughed cheerfully.

"Well, now that I'm here——" he began.

"Now that you're here," interrupted the superintendent, "you can go back where you came from. I'm busy to-day."

He jerked his head at the pink-faced constable, and closed the door.

"Well?" he asked, turning back to the secretary.

"But this is terrible," exclaimed Mr. Jeffries. "You say that Mr. Weekes—that there was a warrant out for his arrest?"

"I do," said the superintendent. "I'm sorry for you, my man, but I think you've had rather a lucky escape. Another twenty-four hours, and we might have been roping you in, too."

The secretary's jaw dropped.

"But I hadn't the faintest idea," he gasped. "I hadn't——"

"Of course not," said Mr. Tomlin. And then his features relaxed into a grim smile.

"After all," he added, "you've got a new suit for nothing."

Mr. Jeffries looked down at the new suit.

"I feel I oughtn't to be wearing it," he said. "I feel——"

"There, there," the superintendent broke in. "I don't suppose Weekes's creditors will worry about the suit. It's a nice bit of stuff, though. Where did you get it?"

Mr. Jeffries showed a little surprise at this question, as well he might.

"At a place in the Edgware Road," he answered. "I think the name was Hurst Brothers."

This reply, however, seemed to be wasted on the superintendent, who had just opened the door again.

"Well," he said, "that's about all for the present. I've got your address, haven't I? Right you are. I'll let you know if I want you again."

Mr. Jeffries picked up his hat and went off, while Mr. Tomlin embarked on a careful though unproductive examination of the contents of the flat. He whistled a good deal while he was at this work, and, as the pink-faced constable could have told you, this was a bad sign for somebody. He only hoped that it did not presage further trouble for himself for having failed to keep *The Evening Record* man out of the flat.

LATE that evening Superintendent Tomlin was discussing the affair with a friend and colleague in his room at Scotland Yard.

"It's an odd little case," he said. "Everything points to the probability that Weekes had been planning to bolt. He'd got away with forty thousand pounds of other people's savings, and he must have known he couldn't last much longer in the City. The stuff he left in that flat was practically worthless—not even a scarf-pin, and these fellows are generally pretty dressy. It almost looks to me as if he *had* had a fit."

"Does it?" said his colleague. "There's someone knocking at your door."

"Come in!" shouted the superintendent. A messenger appeared with an envelope. "For me? Ah, thanks." The messenger withdrew again.

"This," added Mr. Tomlin, fingering the envelope, "is the result of the autopsy. Shall we make a guess at what's in it?"

"It would be simpler to look and see," suggested his friend.

"So it would," agreed Mr. Tomlin, and he ripped the envelope open.

"Ah!" he said, after a moment. "Traces of opium. Traces of alcohol. M—m—cardiac affection. Well, what do you think?"

"Sounds like what they call 'knock-out drops,'" murmured his companion.

"Go slow," said the superintendent. "Any fellow who'd had a whisky-and-soda and a few drops of chlorodyne would fill this bill. It's likely enough that Weekes hadn't been sleeping any too well, and if he'd got something wrong with his heart——" He broke off, and whistled a few tuneless bars. "It's a rum business," he concluded.

His companion laughed.

"You're on to something, are you?" he asked.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mr. Tomlin, seriously. "But it doesn't all quite fit.. Why did Weekes engage this new secretary? Why wasn't there any jewellery in the flat?"

"Why should there be? There *have* been City sharks who didn't wear jewellery."

"Have there?" asked the superintendent, innocently. "There was a bundle of jewellers' receipts, though, for all kinds of studs and pins and cuff-links, *and* a gold watch. The stuff that Weekes was wearing when we found him wouldn't have fetched ten bob."

"Perhaps he'd pawned it all," suggested the other.

"Ah!" said Mr. Tomlin. "Very likely. I shall have to look into that."

"What about the valet? Perhaps he——"

"Very likely," said Mr. Tomlin again. "I'm having him watched. I'm having everyone watched. And, oh, Lord"—here he yawned cavernously—"I've got *such* a busy day to-morrow. Perhaps we'd better go home to bed."

As they went down the stairs together, the superintendent began whistling once more.

IT seemed as though Mr. Tomlin's casual inspection of the new secretary's papers must have been less casual than had appeared, for his busy day began with a visit to a certain Labour Exchange, where he was closeted for some time with the manager. They examined a quantity of records together, and the superintendent had a brief telephone conversation with a doctor at the nearest branch of the Ministry of Pensions. Then he drove off to Queen's Court Mansions and had a word or two with the plain-clothes man who was keeping a fatherly eye on the service-valet's activities. He listened to his report in silence, nodded once or twice, and then took a longer journey to the offices of the Anglo-Peruvian Bank.

He shouldered his way through the crowd of idlers who were gaping at the closed door, presented his credentials, and was admitted. A skeleton staff were working nervously under the direction of a chartered

accountant, and Superintendent Tomlin introduced himself to the head clerk.

"Did Mr. Weekes say anything to you about engaging a new private secretary?" he asked.

"Yes," said the head clerk. "He mentioned it only the other day. I don't know why he told me, though, as I understood it was only for his personal letters."

"Ah!" said Mr. Tomlin. "Mr. Weekes was a clean-shaven man, wasn't he?"

"No," answered the head clerk. "He had a moustache and a little pointed beard. An 'Imperial,' I think they call it."

"Do they?" said the superintendent. "Well, here's another question that perhaps you can answer. Do you know if Mr. Weekes had ever learnt shorthand?"

"It's funny you should ask me," said the head clerk. "He used to take quite a lot of notes in that way. I've often seen him doing it."

"Ah!" said the superintendent again. "Thanks very much." And he drove off again to Messrs. Hurst Brothers' shop in the Edgware Road.

After ten minutes he came out of it again, whistling, and drove along to the lodgings in the mean street where Mr. Jeffries lived.

"Second floor," said the slatternly woman who admitted him. "You'll find him there if you go up."

"Thank you, ma," said the superintendent pleasantly. And then: "Has Mr. Jeffries been here long?"

"Came in two days ago," answered the woman. "Said he'd got a new job in the neighbourhood. 'S anything wrong?"

"Nothing," said the superintendent, more pleasantly than ever. And he bounded lightly up the stairs.

"MAY I come in?" he asked, knocking on the door with one hand and opening it with the other.

Mr. Jeffries—who was in his shirt-sleeves—rose quickly to greet his visitor; but his greeting, though warm, was scarcely friendly.

"Look here," he said, "you've put a man on to shadow me. What does it mean?"

"A mere formality," said the superintendent. "I'll have him taken off, if it's worrying you."

"Of course it's worrying me," retorted Mr. Jeffries. "How'd you like it if someone was following you about all the time? And what have you got against me, anyway?"

"Nothing at all," answered Mr. Tomlin. "I only came to tell you the result of the autopsy. We think it's murder."

Mr. Jeffries gave a start.

"Murder?" he echoed. "But who—I mean, why——"

"Fellow'd been doped," said Mr. Tomlin. "Never mind the medical details, but they say it can't have been suicide. It's annoying, because suicide's the obvious explanation."

"That's been my opinion all along," said the other.

"Eh?"

"I mean, ever since I heard what that newspaper man said. I tell you, this isn't going to make it any easier for me to find another job. Is it?"

"Well, well," said the superintendent, kindly. "We'll see if anything can be done. But what I wanted to ask you was this. We've learnt that Mr. Weekes had a whole lot of jewellery, but we can't find it. Did *you* see him wearing any?"

Mr. Jeffries looked blank.

"Jewellery?" he repeated.

"Cuff links," said the superintendent. "Studs. Watch chain. All that sort of stuff. Between you and me, I'm keeping an eye on that service-valet. He's been in trouble before, you know, and——"

"Ah!" interrupted Mr. Jeffries. "Yes. Now you mention it, I do remember Mr. Weekes was wearing those things. But, of course, I've no idea——"

"No, no," said Mr. Tomlin. "Of course not."

His hand slid quietly from the jacket of the secretary's suit, where it had been lying over the foot of the bed.

"Well, well," he said again. "I'm much obliged to you. I'll go and tell my man down there to clear out now. And I wouldn't worry about that job," he added. "I'm sure something will turn up."

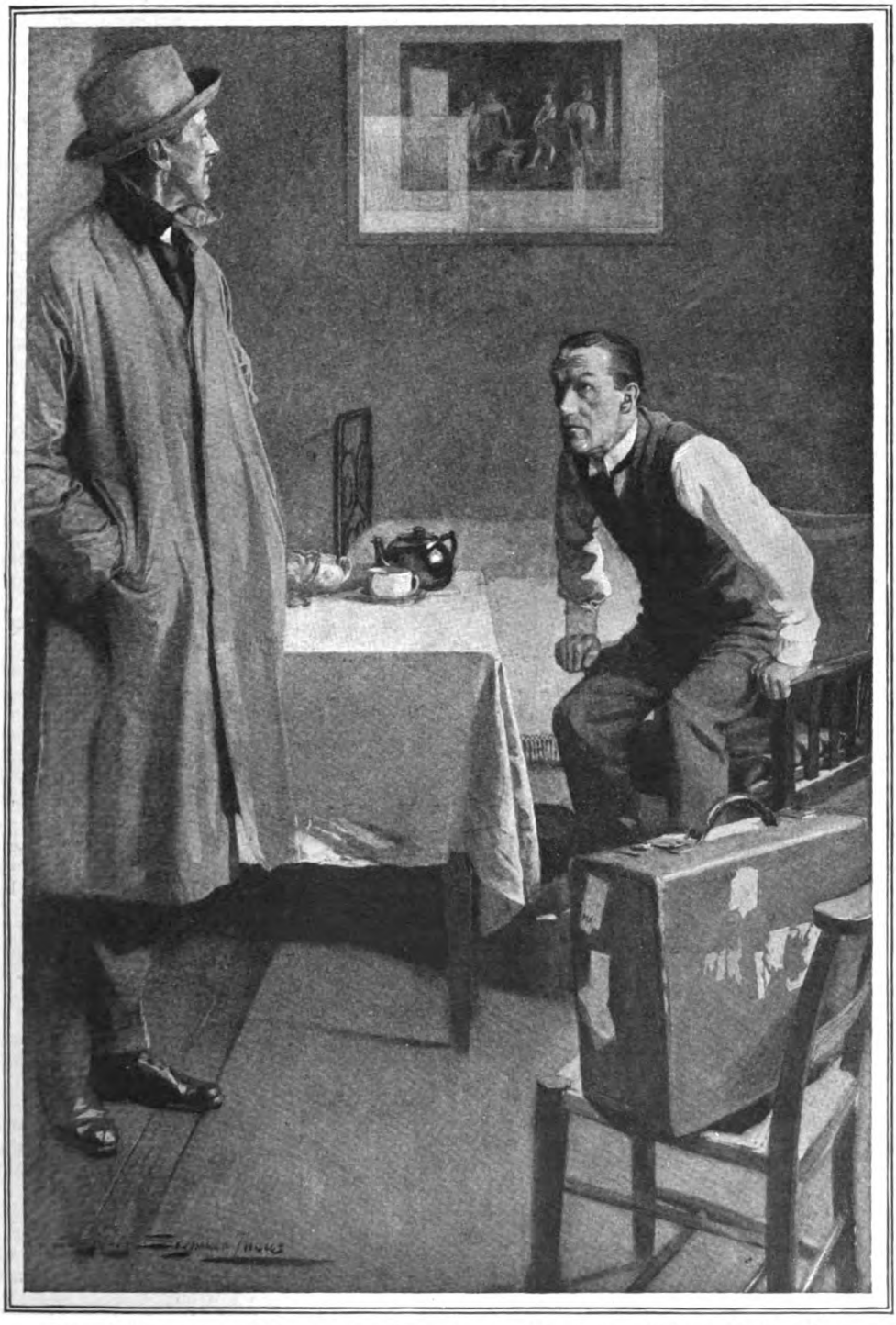
He gave a friendly nod and left the house. Crossing the road, he snapped his fingers, and was joined by a seedy-looking man with big feet.

"You've been spotted, Mullins," he said. "I'm telephoning for someone to relieve you. Meanwhile you'll have to do what you can from the pub at the corner. Better luck next time."

A grateful look came into the plain-clothes man's eyes, to vanish instantly as his chief began to whistle. Superintendent Tomlin hoisted himself back into his taxi.

"Back to Edgware Road," he said. "There's another outfitter's—Burrows is the name—a few doors from where we went before. I want you to stop there."

He spent only five minutes inside Messrs. Burrows's establishment, and then returned direct to his office. After a period of meditation he emerged for lunch, and did himself remarkably well. Then he went back to his room and attacked the arrears on his desk. Twice during the afternoon his telephone rang, but his answers were confined



Mr. Jeffries rose quickly to greet his visitor. "Look here," he said, "you've put a man on to shadow me. What does it mean?"

to brief grunts. Then, about four o'clock, it rang again.

"Hullo!" said the superintendent, lifting his receiver. "Tomlin here."

"This is Brown, sir. I'm speaking from Queen's Court Mansions."

"Well?"

"If you ask me, sir, I think that valet's going to do a bolt."

"Why?"

"He's been out to a Cook's office, and got a ticket through to Paris. By Newhaven. It's for to-night."

"All right," said Mr. Tomlin. "I'll see you at Victoria. Or if not—well, anyway, keep an eye on him until I do see you."

He replaced his receiver and, after a short burst of whistling, applied himself once more to his papers.

"Clumsy fellow," he muttered once, but apart from this observation he kept strictly to the matter in hand.

HE came into public view again about dinner-time, bowling off in another taxi; but not to Victoria. For some reason he had chosen to make a return visit to the mean street where Mr. Jeffries was living. As before, he bounded up the stairs and announced himself by a simultaneous knocking and entrance. As before, Mr. Weekes's secretary leapt angrily to his feet.

"Look here," he said, resentfully. "What's the game? I tried to go out just now, and one of your fellows stopped me. You can't do that sort of thing, you know."

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Tomlin. "I didn't want to miss you. We're going to make an arrest."

"An arrest?" repeated Mr. Jeffries, with every sign of astonishment.

"Yes. You remember the Swiss valet at Weekes's flat? I've had him under observation, and he's trying to slip away. He's got a bad record, I'm afraid. In fact, he's wanted in his own country. It's my belief that he's responsible for Weekes's death, and that he's clearing out with that jewellery."

Mr. Jeffries looked a little puzzled.

"But why did you come here and tell me?" he asked.

"Oh!" said the superintendent, "you're the principal witness that Weekes was wearing the things just before he died. I want you to be present when we examine him."

"I'd much rather keep out of it," said Mr. Jeffries.

"I sympathize," replied the superintendent. "But we can't really do without you. I've got a cab waiting downstairs, and we'll run you down to Victoria in no time."

"Well," said Mr. Jeffries, "if I must, I must."

"Quite," said Mr. Tomlin.

They entered the cab and drove away together.

"Where are you going to make the arrest?" asked the secretary, presently. "At the station?"

"That's right," said the superintendent, breaking off in the tune that he was whistling.

"Aren't you afraid he'll get away in the crowd?"

"We'll hope not," said the superintendent. "Though there's always a certain risk."

"I remember hearing once," said Mr. Jeffries, "that a good thing to do, when you were after someone in a crowd, was to call out his name suddenly. He'll always turn round, I was told, even if he knows that he's wanted."

"That's a good idea," said the superintendent. "The valet's name is—is—— Bother! it's gone out of my head, and my assistant's got the warrant."

"Isn't it 'Schwarz'?" suggested his companion.

"You're quite right," said the superintendent, enthusiastically. "How on earth did you know?"

"I heard Mr. Weekes speaking to him," explained Mr. Jeffries.

"Of course," said Mr. Tomlin. "Well, here we are."

They got out of the cab and made their way towards the departure platform. Superintendent Tomlin seemed to have quite a number of acquaintances among the crowd, and he had a confidential word with several of them.

"Plain-clothes men," he explained to his companion. "Now we'll wait over here by the barrier."

"Are you sure he isn't on the train already?" asked Mr. Jeffries.

"Positive," said the superintendent. "Hullo! Here he comes. Now, then; let's try your dodge."

He took a deep breath, stood up on tiptoe, and prepared to call out. But he didn't call out. Instead, there came a voice from the thick of the crowd behind him.

"Why, hullo, Weekes!" it said.

Mr. Jeffries turned round suddenly, turned back again more suddenly still, met the superintendent's eye, and went pale green in the face.

"Thank you," said the superintendent. "That will do nicely."

There was no struggle. Only a couple of sharp clicks, as the handcuffs were locked on the ex-secretary's wrists.

"Now we'll go for another cab ride," said Mr. Tomlin. "And on the way I'll read you the warrant. Two warrants, in fact," he

added. "One for fraud and embezzlement, and the other for—yes, you're quite right—for the murder of John Jeffries."

SUPERINTENDENT TOMLIN was again discussing the Weekes case with his old friend and colleague.

"A dirty little blackguard," he said. "It's a pity he can't serve his sentence as well as being hanged." He heaved a loud sigh. "I'm afraid I've been terribly untruthful these last two days," he added.

His friend chuckled.

"You've been pretty smart, anyhow," he suggested.

"That may be," said Mr. Tomlin. "But I have *not* been truthful. I told them all at Queen's Court Mansions that I'd gone up there to arrest Weekes. I hadn't. I didn't even know he lived there. I'd gone along to serve a deportation order on Schwarz. It was only when I found what had happened that I thought I'd start giving everyone a bit of rope. That's the only system, in my experience. Give 'em all lots of rope, and never accept anything they tell you without checking it. Let's get the thing into shape, shall we?"

His friend nodded.

"Well," said the superintendent, "here's what Weekes had done. He'd gone off to a Labour Exchange and engaged a private secretary, and he'd taken particular trouble to pick on a man with a weak heart. That set me thinking. Then there was the identification of the body. Everyone could swear to the clothes, but no one could swear to the face. There wasn't one to swear to. Then this so-called secretary made a mistake about where he'd bought his suit. Why? And why, when I got on to the right shop, did they give me a description which wouldn't fit the secretary I'd seen? Why had everybody heard about this new secretary, and yet nobody'd seen him till he rolled up yesterday morning? Fishy, I thought. Very fishy.

"Then there was the jewellery. Had Weekes got rid of it? Or had someone stolen it? I began talking about that jewellery. I wanted to see what everyone would do.

"Weekes—the real Weekes, I mean—must have had that unfortunate Jeffries round late at night, after the porter had gone off, let him in himself, given him a drink which knocked him out—you remember the 'cardiac affection'?—and finished him off, if it was necessary, by giving him a crack on the head. Then he changed clothes with the dead body, heaved it into the fireplace—ugh!—and shaved off his own beard and moustache. Then he went off to the lodgings which he'd taken by letter. He hoped we'd think it was suicide, and that he could settle down to enjoy himself with the loot.

"But it was the jewellery that really did him in. He'd been too mean to leave it behind, and when I told him it was a murder case and that we suspected the valet, he became a little too clever—as I felt pretty certain he would. He thought he'd fasten it on to the valet properly, and as a start he rang him up and—speaking as an anonymous friend—told him he was going to be arrested. Schwarz had reasons of his own for avoiding too many questions, so—as Weekes meant him to—he decided to skip out. Weekes watched him go off to buy his ticket, and then nipped down to the basement and planted his gold watch and a set of studs in the lining of Schwarz's little bag. He was seen doing it. I'd told him that Schwarz was being watched, so he knew he wouldn't get far, and he had every reason for hoping that he'd be hanged for the murder."

"But wait a moment," said the listener. "Why did you let Schwarz get away?"

"They're arresting him at Dieppe," answered the superintendent. "After all, if he chooses to deport himself, it's only saving us money. I've nothing to hold him for on this side. And don't worry about the watch and studs; I'll get them back by registered post.

"But do you know what Weekes had the impudence to tell me as we were driving to the police-station? 'You'll never hang me for this,' he said. 'I've got a doctor's statement that Jeffries was dying of heart disease. He couldn't have lived six weeks in any case.'

"And do you know what I said to that?" added the superintendent. "'Well,' I said, 'if that's so, then he must have been more like you than I imagined.' Rather a neat answer, I thought. What?"

BOLSHEVIK

N.B.—That portion of the story in italic type represents past events as recalled by the two leading characters.

THE evening was cold and raw. A heavy mist, which was not yet a fog, but soon would be, had settled on the mean streets and alleys south of the Thames. But the rain had ceased.

The stout man in the dark overcoat with the fur collar and cuffs approached leisurely. He halted and gazed into the window of a small shop where newspapers were displayed, and cheap novelettes and racing tipsters' advertisements and sweets and tobacco.

The three men who stood in the archway leading from the narrow cobbled lane into the warehouse yard watched the stout man intently.

Sandy Lucas, a thin, undersized, hungry-looking London Scot, grinned.

"It's the likes o' him that's bleedin' the likes of us white," he said. "Here's where I get my first feed today. This bloke's got too much money."

Mucky Matthews, who was taller than Sandy but not so thin, glanced uneasily over his shoulder. There was no one in sight but an old woman, and his fears left him.

"You won't 'urt 'im, Sandy, will yer?"

"Come off it!" said Sandy. "Who's talkin' o' hurtin'? If I gi'e him a clip on the lug that'll be all he'll need. You see."

Joe Dorman, the biggest man of the three, said in a deep growl:—

"I've got so now I'd out anyone, almost, for a tanner an' sleep happy arter it."

Mucky said:—

"'Ere, don't talk like that, Joe, for Gord's sake!"

The stout man in the coat with the fur collar moved on once more.

He seemed cheerful. His lips curled into a smile under his stubby brown moustache. His eyes twinkled. His large pink face shone with good health and contentment. He looked like a man who enjoyed three, if not four, excellent

"Hand over! All you got! No nonsense!"

By W. TOWNEND

Illustrated by H·M·BROCK·R·I·

meals a day. The scent of his cigar preceded him.

Sandy Lucas stepped forward and laid a hand on the stout man's fur cuff and drew him gently into the archway.

"Hand over!" he said, in a low voice. "All you got! No nonsense!"

"I do not onderstandt," said the stout man.

"We want yer money," sa d Joe Dorman. "Sharp! Yer wallet, yer diamon' pin, yer gold watch."

Above the traffic and the rumble of trains leaving Waterloo there came the shuffle of slow footsteps.

"Make 'aste!" said Mucky Matthews. "There'll be someone comin' if we don't look out. 'Ere, let's get at him."

"You vant my money?" said the stout man. There was something almost childish, Sandy thought, in the way he spoke and in the bewildered look in his blue eyes. "I am a strancher," he said, in his funny guttural voice.

Joe Dorman ripped open the stout man's overcoat.

"That's enough of it."

"Mein Gott!" said the stout man. "Vhat you do wit' me?"

Sandy Lucas uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"You!" he said. "Schmidt!"

"Mercy, kamerad! Mercy!"

A GREY sky. A fresh, clear day. A fine cold rain falling. The smell of high explosive and death and wet earth. Green grass and mounds of chalk, great masses of twisted barbed wire, with men in grey and men in khaki, Highlanders and Lowlanders, lying dead. Great shells tearing down from the sky, screeching. Great black bursts of smoke. Kerrump! Kerrump!

A broken, battered trench: a fire-bay where dead men lay one on top of the other: men in grey.

Private Lucas, of the Royal Scots, stared down into the trench.

One of the swine was alive!

He raised his rifle to his shoulder.

"Come on oot of it!"

A big white-faced German, a fat man with wild and staring blue eyes, scrambled to his feet and stood with his hands above his head, trembling. There was blood on his grey tunic. He was covered from head to foot with white chalky mud. On his head he wore a little round grey and scarlet cap that was too smal' for him.

"Mercy, kamerad! Mercy!"

Private Lucas lowered his rifle.

"All right," he said, "you're my prisoner." He slid down the sloping side of the trench. "Nothin' to be scared of, but no tricks, or this'll gang off, quick—see? Got ony money on ye? If ye ha'e, I'd better keep it, or the ridcaps 'ull steal it off ye."

The German shivered and closed his eyes.

A dud shell ploughed into the ground some twenty or so yards distant with a kerrup !

" Maker's name," said Private Lucas. "A dam' puir ad., too ! "

He put his prisoner's ivory-handled penknife and a soft tobacco pouch which had taken his fancy into the crown of his Tam o' Shanter bonnet. " Got ony money ? "

" No money," said the German.

Around the corner of the traverse there came three bloodstained scarecrows in khaki with their blue-grey gas helmets rolled up under their bonnets like turbans.

When they saw Private Lucas and his German they yelled :—

" Hey, Sandy, whit ha'e ye fcon' ? "

" Hey, fellas, Sandy Lucas has ta'en a pris'ner ! "

" Gi'e him five yards, Sandy, an' thraw a bomb at him ! The damned murderin' German ! "

" You mauna dae that," said Private Lucas, stubbornly. " He pit his haun's up an' surrendert."

The men laughed.

" Man, dinna ye ken we canna be bothered wi' pris'ners ? "

" You tech ma pris'ner, MacKenzie, or you, Allison, an' I'll rin ye through wi' ma bay'net ! I wull ! " Private Lucas, most Scotch when roused, was suddenly furious. " Whit the de'il dae ye think ye're daein' ? Awa wi' ye an' bile yer heids ! "

MacKenzie caught hold of the prisoner's arm.

" Mein Gott ! " said the stout German. " Vhat you do wit' me ? "

" HERE, Joe," said Sandy Lucas, " you chuck it. Mucky, you take yer hands oot of my friend's pockets, else I'll gi'e you a wipe over the jaw. D'jer hear ? "

Herr Schmidt stared at Sandy Lucas and gasped.

" It is you, den ? So ! My friendt, I am happy ! " The look of fear in the mild blue eyes vanished. The broad round face crinkled into a beaming smile.

" How are yer, Jerry ? " said Sandy.

He and the German shook hands.

" Here," said Joe Dorman, " Sandy, what the blazes are you playin' at ? "

Sandy Lucas turned fiercely on his two friends.

" Gimme back that wallet an' that pin ! D'jer hear me, Joe, an' you, Mucky ? Fork out, sharp."

And such was Sandy Lucas's force of character that, though the two men with him growled, they handed back what they had stolen without further argument.

Sandy explained.

" This here," he said, " is a pal o' mine. Didn't recognize him till I heard him speak. See ? "

" Why didn't you say so before ? " said Joe.

Mucky spat into the gutter.

" Looks to me like a bloomin' frame-up—Sandy takes the kitty."

" Hop it," said Sandy, curtly. " Want me to use me boot on yer ? "

Mucky Matthews and Joe Dorman drifted away into the grey mist.

Sandy Lucas surveyed Herr Schmidt thoughtfully.

" What brings you here, eh ? "

" I am in London on business."

" I see," said Sandy.

Old Schmidt was rich. That was clear as daylight. His clothes were good. He had money in his wallet, bank-notes, fivers ! He smoked cigars with gold bands. He had a gold watch and chain. A big ring with a red stone. A diamond pin.

Old Schmidt was one of the oppressors of the poor. He must be. How else would he be rich ? Almighty ! but he was sure of himself.

But he hadn't been sure of himself always.

PRIVATE LUCAS, no longer in a trench, but on a muddy road, marched with his rifle at the slope, a fag between his lips. Ahead of him limped his prisoner, dragging his right leg.

Wounded men outside a Field Ambulance dressing-station grinned.

" Hey, Jock, whit are ye gaun to dae wi' yer pairformin' bear ? "

" He's ma prisoner ; you let him alane."

" It's auld Von Klock he's got. Or mebbe the Kaiser. Mak' him dance, lad. Prod him wi' yer bay'net. If he's real, likely he'll squeal."

Though the wounded men laughed uproariously and joked, their faces were hard and their eyes cruel.

The prisoner halted and turned to Private Lucas.

" Get on, Jerry. I got to hand you over to someone who'll look after ye. Dinna ye pay no attention to them Glesca keelies, or you'll be hurt."

The prisoner plodded on, head down, shoulders bowed.

On their left were the twin towers of the pithead and the big Double Crassier over which Private Lucas had made his way earlier in the day, with machine-gun bullets raising spurts of black dust between the rails. But that was long before Private Lucas's company had melted away into nothingness and he had found himself adrift, on his own.

They turned into the main street of Loos, where dead Highlanders lay at the doors of houses where the fighting had been with the bayonet.

A shell came screeching overhead. Private Lucas and his prisoner fell on their faces in the mud. There was a crash, and the front of a house opposite collapsed in a shower of bricks and mortar and dust.

The German jumped to his feet. "Gott, I will be killt!" He tried to bolt, clumsily, in a panic, but Private Lucas drove the butt of his rifle into the small of his broad and fleshy back.

"If ye dinna come alang o' me, you fat hulk, I'll pit a bullet through ye! Dae ye unnerstaun'?"

The German's face worked convulsively. He whimpered and talked to himself in German. Then he said, thickly, making a sweeping gesture with his hands, palms downward:—

"Blease excuse. I haff had a bad time. In dot trench it vos derrible! Gott! Dis war, it trive me mad."

"Hey, Jock, whit are ye gaun to dae wi' yer pairfcrmin' bear?"

SANDY chuckled.

"Not much like the war now, is it, Jerry? Remember when you an' me was in that street in Loos together an' your guns were plasterin' the place with H.E., eh? All right, wasn't it?"

They had walked to the end of the narrow lane, and stood at the corner under a lamp, outside a public-house, open for the evening's trade.

Great roaring motor-buscs, crammed with people, heavy lorries, vans, taxi-cabs, private motor-cars—rich men's cars, damn them!—passed southward in an unending stream, splashing showers of liquid mud over the hurrying foot-passengers on the pavement, homeward bound. An engine was screeching raucously in the gloom: trains rumbled over the bridge: the noise made conversation difficult.

An old woman with a jug in her hand and a shawl thrown over her head shuffled into a side door of the public-house. A small child in a torn thin print frock and a pair of shoes much too large for her and no stockings, a thin-faced, unhealthy little child with tangled hair, crept up the narrow side-street, wailing pitifully.

Herr Schmidt clucked his tongue. "Mein Gott!" He squared his shoulders and looked at Sandy inquiringly. "You are not so well, hey? You are poor."

Sandy nodded.

"An' you are rich, eh, Jerry?"

"It all depend on der point of view, which is gomparative, is it not?"

"You got money, anyway, an' enough to eat."

Sandy reflected. He hadn't eaten since the day before. He was hungry. Old Jerry wasn't. But he had been once! Starving!

THEY sat on a pile of bricks outside a gutted house. Four dead men lay in the mud near them: three were Highlanders, with kilts and bare legs; the fourth was a corporal from an English regiment: a Londoner, from the 47th, perhaps.

There was no cover. The German shivered and looked apprehensively over his shoulder toward the twin towers and the firing-line and Hill 70, where the roar of rifle-fire seemed to grow louder and louder.

"Had we not bedder go avay from here?"

"No," said Private Lucas. "I'm too dam' tired to walk. I want a rest. I've a good mind to let you go."

"No," said the prisoner. "No, I beg of you. If I am found here, alone, dey will shoot me against a wall. I know dem. Gott in Himmel, dey will haff no gompassion, your Scotchmen!"

"Then sit where you are an' don't jaw," said Private Lucas. "Are you hungry?"

"Hongry! I am famishedt."

Private Lucas leant forward and groped in the web haversack of the nearest dead man until he found the little bag in which were his iron rations.

He tried to open the tin of bully beef with the opener, but the metal broke in a V-shaped piece. He swore.

"Never can manage those dam' things," he said, and reached for his jack knife.

He and his prisoner were eating slices of bully beef and biscuit when a wounded sergeant of his own battalion limped by.

"Hullo, Sandy!" he called. "Whaur did ye rake him in, eh?"

"Found him in a trench, 'ergeant!"

The sergeant rested on his rifle.

"Ye'd best haun' him ower to me. I'll tak' charge of him. You maun get back to the battalion. They're in a bad wey up thonder on the hill."

Sandy sighed and rose to his feet and gave his heavy equipment a hitch forward.

"Richt!"

And then the sergeant coughed and fell on his knees and slowly dived over on to his face and lay sprawling in three inches of water.

When Sandy bent over him and lifted him up, he was dead.

"You will gome in here an' eat," said Herr Schmidt.

HERR SCHMIDT slid his arm through Sandy's and led him toward a small coffee-shop.

In the window were steaming hot joints of beef and mutton and pork, with slices cut out of them, in dishes swimming with gravy, and dishes of sausages, sizzling, and liver and bacon, and steak and onion.

A man in a white jacket and apron was carving. The place was crowded with customers.

"You will gome in here an' eat," said Herr Schmidt. "And afterward you will talk to me."

Sandy shook his head.

"No, Jerry, can't be done!" He rubbed the toe of his right shoe against his left heel. "No, don't ask me, or mebbe I'd say 'yes,' an' be sorry afterwards!"

"But you are hongry!"

"That's right, too!" Sandy's awe of the fur collar and cuffs and the big cigar and the diamond pin had gone. This was only old Jerry whose life he had saved. A man no better than himself. Richer, perhaps, but no better. Not a ha'porth.

"You see, Jerry, I got a wife at home. See? She's had a hard time: buried a couple o' kids this last three months, see, an' it's kind o' give her a knock-out. An' she ain't strong, anyway. See? She needs food more than I do, Jerry."

Sandy stopped abruptly, feeling shy and ill at ease and afraid that Jerry, who after all—damn him!—was only a blooming *bourgeois*, would laugh at him and leave him.

But Herr Schmidt merely nodded his head and looked grave and said:—

"Gott! An' she is hongry, too. Do I onderstandt dot you haff lose your two liddle young ones?"

Sandy nodded.

"Lisden, friendt. I will buy you food. An' you will take me vhere you live. An' we will haff a feast, a celebration, a *fête*—how do you gall it?—a reunion. For, in der war, you haff save my life and never will I forget. I mus' help you."

"That's kind o' you," said Sandy. "We could do with a feed, o' course." He spoke gruffly to hide his emotion. "It ain't all lavender in this dam' country, I can tell

you. I'm flesh an' blood, Jerry, same as you, an' I can't stand no more of it. I'm a Bolshie. That's what I am. A ruddy Bolshie. Out to get what I can from them that's keepin' me in the gutter."

The German wrinkled his forehead and raised his eyebrows.

"You make der revolution, hein?"

"Ah! Like they done in Russia. The poor man's on top there, livin' on the fat o' the land. That's what'll happen here. Revolution, Jerry, that's the trick. Revolution."

Sandy Lucas ended in a deep-throated growl. He hoped that what he had said hadn't been entirely foolish. It was difficult to remember all that he had heard from the funny, dark-faced little Jew-man with the beard and the spectacles who'd talked of the red flag and the red blood of the martyrs. It was difficult to remember anything very much when you were half-starved and hadn't eaten since the day before. An' those dam' motor-buses making that dam' noise, an' the fog choking you. God, what a mess!

The stout German looked at the little man by his side and smiled.

"You will make der revolution," he said. "*Ja!* I have a belief you will."

"Beg pardon, sir, but you couldn't help an old soldier, could you, sir?"

"An' why not? What's this country done for me, eh?"

Two well-dressed, prosperous-looking young men, talking and laughing, walked in the same direction as Sandy and Herr Schmidt. They halted to let a man carrying a box on his shoulder pass to his lorry drawn up at the kerb.

Sandy glanced at them, under the light of a street lamp, and wondered why their voices made him so angry.

"We'll just have time to change and get back to town again before dinner," said one of the young men.

"What are we going to do afterward?" said the other.

"Dance, I suppose: dance and supper!"

Sandy wheeled suddenly and spoke.

"Beg pardon, sir, but you couldn't help an old soldier, could you, sir?"

The young man hesitated.

"An old soldier?" he said.

His friend said:—

"Oh, come on, Tony, or we'll be late." He said to Sandy: "I make a point of never giving to beggars in the street."

Sandy grinned at Herr Schmidt.

"Did you hear that, Jerry? Those two, they're what they'd call the upper classes. Me, I belong to the ruddy lower classes. An' why? They've got the ruddy cash, I haven't. I'm the mud under their feet. Did you hear how they spoke to me?"

DARKNESS in the village street where the company had formed up.

A heavy rain falling. Mud.

God! It'd be mucky in the trenches, digging!

In the distance from beyond Philosophe, the rise and fall of gun-fire.

The platoon sergeant was calling the roll.

"It's aye oor battalion fur warkin' parties!" said the man on Private Lucas's right.

"It isna fair, draggin' us oot oor billets nicht efter nicht," said the man on Private Lucas's left.

The Company Sergeant-Major said sharply:—

"There's some yin talkin' i' the rear-r rank! Wha is't?"

There was no answer. A man in the front rank chuckled.

The platoon commander came out of the dark doorway of the little house which was company headquarters.

"That was Lucas, of course,"

he said. His slow and drawling voice seemed to cut you through and through. "Lucas, you're a dam' disgrace to the battalion. You're no good. I'm sick and tired of hearing you. Why can't you try and make a soldier of yourself? If the rest of the company was like you, God help us! Sergeant-Major, bring him up to company orderly room to-morrow."

Private Lucas's cheeks burned.

Damn him. Damn him and that you-be-damned *accent of his! A ruddy toff! What right had he to talk like that to a man who'd done no wrong?*

"Lucas, you're a dam' disgrace to the battalion. You're no good."

HE never had been brought up at company orderly room, either, Sandy reflected.

The Company Sergeant-Major got a bullet through the shoulder within the hour and was sent down the line. The officer—damn him!—must have forgot.

Herr Schmidt uttered a little laugh.

"My friendt, you are melangholy."

Sandy Lucas choked.

"'I make a point o' never givin' to beggars,' ses he. *Me!*"

Herr Schmidt clucked his tongue in sympathy and went into the little coffee-shop.

Sandy waited outside, his back to the lighted window and the steaming joints of meat, and stared with heavy eyes at the traffic of motors passing in the wet fog, at the glowing head-lights, and the people on the pavement.

Poor devils! he thought. Men and women going home after working all day long, earning money for other people, no better than themselves, but luckier. Slaves! Wage slaves!

And, thought Sandy with sudden envy, dam' lucky themselves to have wages to work for.

But that was wrong. He was mixing things up.

Herr Schmidt was by his side again. With him was a boy from the coffee-shop, who wore an apron and carried a holder with four covered dishes, one above the other, and a coffee-pot. Herr Schmidt had a loaf of bread wrapped in an old newspaper under one arm.

"And now will you take me to your home an' we will eat, an' den you will dell me your droubles."

Sandy opened the door of his room, lit only by the light of a lamp in the street almost level with the window.

The girl who sat at the table, her cheek resting on the palm of her hand, raised her head.

"Why, Sandy!" she said.

"I've brought a friend," he said. "We're goin' to have a feed. Jerry, here's the missus."

The girl stood up. She was very thin. Her face was white and peaked. Her skin seemed transparent. Her hair was black and her eyes blue. She wore an old black dress, very shabby, but clean and neat. She coughed as she looked up to Herr Schmidt.

"Pleased to meet you, sir."

Sandy frowned at her use of the "sir."

"Won't you sit down?" she said. "It isn't much of a place." Her voice faltered. "I'm sorry." She struck a match and lit a candle.

The room was poor and plainly furnished with a deal table and two chairs, an old chest of drawers, and a bed with two legs at the head and the foot supported on two wooden sugar-boxes. A patch-work quilt of faded blues and reds rested on the top of what seemed far too little bedding for the time of year. There was no fire and the air of the room was damp. The wall-paper was stained.

Herr Schmidt, bareheaded, hat in hand, stood by the table and looked about him with troubled eyes.

For a long time no one spoke.

He spoke to the boy from the coffee-shop: "Put der dings on der table. Gome back in an hour's time."

The boy went out.

"Is dere no vay of having a fire?"

"There's a meter," said the girl in her low voice. "But we've no coppers."

Herr Schmidt laid six pennies on the table.

"Vhen der first supply is finish, we mus' haff more."

Sandy put three of the pennies into the slot and turned the handle each time as far as it would go, and struck a match and lit the fire with a *pop*.

The pale blue flames changed gradually to a red glow.

The room grew warm.

The girl brought plates and knives and forks and three cups to the table.

"We ain't got nothin' very good," she said.

"No," said Sandy, "or else we'd have pawned 'em, eh? But the day's comin', Bess, when you an' me will live in Piccadilly or Park Lane, where the nobs live now, an' then you'll have what you want, everything."

The girl sighed. "Who said so?"

"I say so!" said Sandy.

"I'd rather you had a steady job," said the girl.

"Goodt," said Herr Schmidt. "Mrs. Lucas, you haff discretion. And now you must eat. Sit down, der two of you."

"Won't you eat too, sir?" said the girl.

The stout German smiled.

"No, dank you. I am not hongry."

Not hungry! Bessie was bewildered. How could anyone not be hungry, however rich, for beef steak and sausages and mashed potatoes, gravy, cabbage, apple pudding, bread and cheese, butter, and hot coffee? What was the use of refusing to eat because one didn't happen to be hungry?

"Wake up, Bessie," said Sandy. She dropped on to a chair. Sandy drew out a box from under the table.

"Take the other chair, Jerry," he said.

"Dank you, I will. Do you mind if I smoke, Mrs. Lucas?"

She shook her head shyly. She was almost horrified. Sandy was calling the gentleman with the fur-lined coat and the diamond pin "Jerry"! It wasn't right. All very well talking about equality, but the rich were rich and the poor were poor.

Bessie had little faith in her husband's revolution.

What was, was! You couldn't change things.

"Why don't you eat, Bessie?" Sandy said. "Don't be afraid."

For a long time no one spoke. Herr Schmidt smoked his cigar and stared at the fire and the damp-stained wall-paper and the broken bed and the bare floorboards and the foggy evening visible through the torn window curtain. And then, when supper was at an end, he sighed.

"An Imberial beoble," he said. "Gott!"

Sandy was startled. What was the matter now? Jerry looked like he'd looked that day at Loos: kind of sad an' sorry for himself.

"My friendt, I owe you my life. My vife

an' my liddle young ones, dey are in your debt."

Wasn't that what he'd said when they'd sat side by side by the broken house?

HOW funny the dead men looked! All stiff and lumpy. And their faces: swollen, yellowish white, and their eyes shut. The blood was black on their khaki and the mud was drying like chalk.

No, never no more would they answer their names when the roll was called! Never no more would they climb on the fire-step at stand-to and stare into the grey at the German trenches.

For them there'd be no more war.

The stout German sighed.

"What's the matter, Jerry?" said Private Lucas, gazing dreamily toward the black shell-bursts on the slag heap.

"It is der war. At home, my friendt, my vife an' my liddle young ones, my children, will be praying for me to-day. Berhaps deir prayers haff been answeredt, hey? Dey are at home, an' I am here, a soldier. Gott! Vhat is to begome of dem if I am killt, hey? Lisden!"

There was a sharp whine and a clang of shrapnel bursting over the houses lower down the street and a patter of steel on the road and broken bricks.

"Gott! Look dere." The prisoner stretched out his arm and pointed toward the dead man that lay in the mud. "Look dere! You see dot? One of der liddle splinders of steel struck der dead Highlander. And if dot had struck me I would be dead. Gott! We are helpless. You and me. Pawns of der machine. Helpless against der lust of civilization."

Going mad, that's what he was, of course.

Private Lucas rose to his feet briskly.

"Here, Jerry, come on, we've got to be moving."

The stout prisoner in the muddy field-grey uniform rose, too.

"A MIRACLE to be alive," said Herr Schmidt.

Sandy glanced at the white face of his wife and nodded.

"Even if you're half dead," he muttered.

"Half dead?" said the German.

"Me an' Bess. We're not wanted. Y'understand? Too many people. The rich got the money an' they ain't got any to spare for us. See? That's the situation, Jerry. Me an' Bessie aren't wanted. We ain't had a chance, have we, Bess?"

The German sighed.

"My friendt," he said, "you are mistaken. We haff our chance, all of us. But I sympathize."

From the street there rose a shrill wailing music.

The German lifted his chin.

"Vhat is dot?"

Sandy smiled.

"There's a feller lives round here, used to be in the Black Watch, who plays the pipes. Bagpipes! Rakes in quite a lot o' money, too."

"Ach, der bagpipes! Derrible."

Sandy resented the tone.

"Mebbe you'd reason to think 'em terrible, if you heard 'em same as I did that day at Loos. God! Listen. 'The Barren Rocks of Aden.' That's the tune. If he plays 'Blue Bonnets' I'll howl." He laughed harshly. "We didn't give you fellers much chance the way we took your trenches, did we?"

The German went to the window and looked out into the fog.

Across the narrow street lights shone in the windows of small rooms.

He said suddenly:—

"And vhat goodt did it do you?"

"The pipes?"

"Der everyding. Der battle. Der war. Der taking of trenches. Vhat goodt did it do you?"

"None," said Sandy. "That's the reason I've gone Bolshie. See? Same as they done in Russia."

"So." Herr Schmidt nodded. "You saved my life and I return to my vife an' my liddle young ones."

"Ours died," said the girl quietly. "Two of 'em. One after another."

Sandy patted her on the shoulder.

Herr Schmidt sat down once more on the unsteady chair and put his hands on his plump knees and frowned.

The music of the pipes tormented him.

"I remember one ding dot you toldt me dot day in der village of Loos. I said you were losin' der war—do you remember?—and you said 'No!' you would win. You would win der war. Do you remember dot?"

"Didn't we win?" said Sandy.

"You won der war and you starve, hey?"

The bagpipes had come nearer. The music had a swing and a lilt that sent Sandy Lucas's thoughts drifting away from the little room and Bessie and Herr Schmidt.

His foot tapped the ground.

Left—left—left, richt, left!

"PICK up the step there. Left—left—left, richt, left."

The battalion was marching along the white road under the hot August sun. The pipes shirled and the dust rose in clouds.

Men of other divisions stood at attention by the side of the road and watched.

Presently there came into view the red brick tower with the leaning Virgin bending over the battered town.

The hot smell of leather and sweat. The weight of the pack. The heavy rifle bearing down on one's shoulder. The ammunition. The steel helmet.

"Hoo mony mair miles are we gaun?"

"A lang wey."

"We're to gang into the line efter daurk."

But that wasn't near Loos or Hulluch or the Hohenzollern Redoubt, but down on the Somme.

"We are helpless. You and me. Pawns of der machine," said his prisoner.

"YOU got out o' that business in time, Jerry," said Sandy. "You were lucky."

"Lucky? Gott!" The German flung out his arms suddenly. "Dell me, friendt, vhy are you Bolshevik? Vhy? Do you dink you will imbrove your brospects?"

"You're dam' right—I do. Why shouldn't me an' Bessie have chicken an' champagne when we want it an' a motor-car an' a box at the opera, eh? Why should I have to work like a slave?"

Herr Schmidt, the employer of hundreds, nodded.

"Ach, vhy? Lisden, friendt. Dere vos a time vhen I vos poor, but I work. I work hardt. I scrrape an' I save. And now—now I haff brosberedt."

"You wouldn't have prospered in England," said Sandy.

The thought of his wrongs made him curse.

"You hate Englandt?" said Herr Schmidt.

"Hate it? Yes! England's no good an' never will be! Not till we get our rights. England's no good, Jerry, an' that's the truth."

"You are right. Englandt is no goodt." Herr Schmidt rose to his feet. He seemed to have suddenly grown larger, stouter, taller. His voice boomed out. "No goodt. No. Dot is der trufe."

Sandy and his wife stared at him and said nothing.

"I dell you, friendts, Englandt is no goodt. I walk in your sdreets. I see der beoble an' my heart bleedt for dem. An Imberial beoble. Der Imberial beoble of my youfe. You starve, you haff no money. I am not surprise. Der last effort vos too much. Der tvilight of der godts. Englandt, she has for too long been der monster dot eat and eat, dot gorge on der bloodt of der weak, so dot she is replete, lazy, incabable of exertion. Der nex' war of vhich we haff heardt is here. Chermany, Russia, der United Stades, Jaban, der virile beobles of der worldt, dey know. Der day of der golossus wit' der feet of clay an' der head of brass an' der belly of robber—vhich is a joke—is finish. It is der tvilight of der godts."

"I dunno what you're drivin' at, Jerry," said Sandy, "but if it's anything to do with smashin' the ruddy capitalists, I'm with you. Yes! Only——" He hesitated and thought. "You're rich. Won't do you any good, will it?"

Herr Schmidt smiled a funny little smile. He waved one hand to and fro solemnly.

"Dot is all right. Do you remember vhen you save my life, I tell you neffer will I forget?"

Sandy gave a shrug of his shoulders.

"You said so. I didn't do anythin', really, Jerry."

"Do you remember vhen you save my life, I tell you neffer will I forget?"

THE stout, pale-faced German, with the scared eyes and the muddy grey uniform and the funny little round cap, blood on his forehead, blood on his high-waisted tunic, stood on the chalky road, hands outstretched.

A couple of red-caps, the stretcher-bearers, the wounded, the other prisoners, all of them were grinning.

"Good-bye, my breserver. Neffer, neffer will I forget vhat you haff for me done to-day! Good-bye, an' may Gott go wit' you."

He had insisted on his shaking hands with him.

One of the red-caps said:—

"Don't you let him kiss you, Jock. They bite."

Sandy had felt no great surprise when he found his platoon commander by his side.

He didn't like him. He never had liked him. There was that voice of his and his manner. He condescended. That stamped him. He condescended. He didn't talk to a feller, man to man, he talked down to you! Always had and always would.

But now, now it was different.

His face was grey, his eyes were bloodshot; he'd lost his bonnet, his right arm was in a sand-bag sling, his right hand was a mass of blood-soaked shell dressings.

"Come on, Lucas," he said. "We've got to be going back."

Private Lucas blinked at him and nodded, and lifted his rifle on to his shoulder. They moved off down the white, wet road along which wounded men were straggling.

"Are you hurt, sir?" said Private Lucas.

"Got a bit of a scratch, and some dam' lunatic tried to put me on a stretcher."

Private Lucas considered this for some time.

"You've no right to be going into the line again," he said.

The officer said:—

"The Fifteenth Division's fighting like hell! I'd be a pretty poor kind of a man if I deserted my own crowd now, shouldn't I?"

Unwillingly, almost, Private Lucas was impressed.

Neither said anything else. They tramped down into Loos, and through the village all the long, weary, muddy, blood-stained way to Hill 70, where they fought the long night through, waiting for reinforcements that came and vanished.

In the morning the officer was dead.

Private Lucas had thought him crazy. His hand, he learned afterward, had been blown to pieces. What on earth had he wanted to go back to the line for when he might have been on his way down to the base?

YES, Jerry had been lucky. He'd spent the rest of the three years of war in England. And now he was rich, Jerry was, and smoking of fat cigars.

"I tell you neffer will I forget," said Herr Schmidt. After a pause, he went on: "Lisden. You can do here no goodt."

"Not till there's a revolution an' we've

hoisted the red flag over the House o' Commons an' Buck'nam Palace. No. But after that, Jerry"—Sandy chuckled and screwed up his eyes—"after that—my God!"

"No," said the German, sharply. "No. Not effen when der revolution gomes. No. You are too goodt a man. You must go avay."

"Go away?" said Sandy. He laughed, then, loudly. "That's what the doctor at the infirm'ry said to Bess here. She must go away, out o' London, if she wanted to get rid of her cough. How can we go, eh? Might have, all the same, if I'd pinched yer wallet to-night, o' course. Ought to have said I was sorry for that, oughtn't I? That's the first time I tried that kind o' game; mebbe it'll be the last, mebbe it won't."

"You must go avay," said Herr Schmidt. "Out of Englandt! Lisden addentively. Dis is my offer. I am rich. *Ja.* Rich. I haff big interests in America, in Texas. You must go dere. Because you are der best man and der bravest man I haff effer seen. You save my life and now you starve and are an embryo Bolshevik, all of vhich is badt for der soul of man. No goodt will be gained by you, bersonally, here to stay. I will pay your exbenses, for you and your vife. I will set you up on der landt. On a farm. I will finance you till you haff foundt your feet. A great gountry, Texas, a young gountry, a rich gountry."

INTO the little estaminet where Private Lucas and four other men of his battalion sat at a little table and drank coffee laced with rum there came a young American.

"Hullo, Yank!" someone said. "Sit ye doon!"

Soon the American, fair-headed, young, a medal ribbon showing on the breast of his tunic under his overcoat, began to talk of home.

"God's country I come from. All I pray is I get out of this hell alive and see it again."

Sandy asked him about Texas.

The American talked about the blue sky and the sunshine and the sparkling air and the cattle and horses and the live oak trees and the sage brush and the coyotes and the open stretches of country, thousands and thousands of miles waiting to be settled, and the chances a man had to get a home of his own and some land and a life worth living.

"A great country, Texas, a country worth fighting for," he said.

A country worth fighting for! Private Lucas considered.

"And where do you come from?" said the American. "Scotland?"

"London," said Private Lucas. "I was born in Edinburgh, but London's my hame."

The American grunted.

"I'm just back from leave. Ten days without seeing the sun once." Then he said, "God! I'm home-sick. That's what's the matter with me, home-sick."

Private Lucas thought for a long time. He said:—

"Could a feller like me have a home of his own, a bit of a farm like, out there, if he hadn't no money to make a start on?"

"TEXAS is a long way off," said Sandy. His voice was steady, but he tingled all over with excitement.

"Dot is all to der goodt. Go vhile you haff der chance. Here you haff no hope. *Hope*—you do not know der meaning of der wordt. Hope! Ach! To sugceed to der seats of der mighty. To live a life of luxury. My friendt, it is imbossible. Der endt is in sight. Der virile beobles of der worldt, dey will destroy der English. It is der bunishment of civilization on der oncivilizedt. Der last war, I dell you, it vos nodin'. Dis is der endt of Englandt. Der tvilight of der godts."

"Gocd-bye, my breserver. Neffer, neffer will I forget vhat you haff for me done to-day!"

"Jerry," said Sandy, "I don't get you." He frowned. "We won the war, didn't we?"

"You lost der war," said Herr Schmidt, passionately. "And you starve in dis slum. Lisden. I pay for you to go to Texas, I fix you up on a ranch, I finance you, you

The piper stood in the gutter playing a dirge.

and your vife, because you are a goodt man, a brave man, and you save my life for my vife an' my liddle young ones. And to show dot I am in earnest, here, you will take dese, an' to-morrow you will gome and see me at my hotel." He laid two five-pound notes on the table in front of the girl who sat listening, round-eyed, her lips parted, her hands in her lap.

Sandy fingered the notes almost timidly.

"God!" he said. Then he stared at the German, whose face was red and damp. "This money now, it's ours?"

"It is yours. To-morrow we arranche your passage to America. You must esgape before it is too late. Before der most cruching defeat in der history of der worldt."

Sandy frowned. Jerry was telling him to go before—before what? Defeat?

He put into words, haltingly, the thoughts that oppressed him.

"You mean we're going to be smashed?"

"Dot, friendt, is exactly vhat I do mean. *Ja!* Get avay from here. Out of Englandt. Out of dis hell upon earth. Der war dot we haff seen, you and I, it is nodin'. Der real war, der war dot will see der end of dis rotten gountry, is here. You are alreaty smash', but you do not know it. Alreaty you can see der writin' on der wall. Great Babylon is fallen. You must go, my friendt, vhile dere is time."

Sandy rose to his feet, choking.

"You say there's to be anither war?" he said, dropping into broad Scots talk. "We'll be fechtin' ye ag'in? Is that whit ye say?"

"Yes," said Herr Schmidt. "Dot is so."

"Then tak' yer damned Judas money oot o' here, you swine! Tak' it an' be damned to ye! Dae ye think I'm coo'ard eneuch to turn an' rin when the—the line's broke, like, an' there's every man of us needit? No, you're nae guid, you Ger-rmans, an' ye ne'er wull be. Bribin' a man to gang beck on his ain folk—ye ocht to think shame o' yersel'."

Herr Schmidt had drawn away from the thin-faced man with the blazing eyes and was watching him in amazement, breathing hard.

He waited until the torrent of words had stopped.

The light of the fire was waning. The music of the pipes in the street seemed to rise up, pagan and melancholy yet triumphant.

"I do not onderstandt," he said. "I do not onderstandt. Vhat you say is impossible."

"That's whaur ye're makin' a dam' mistak'," said Sandy, fiercely. He laughed. "Ye didna unnerstaun' the last time an' we dam' weel moppit the airth wi' ye. Ye dinna unnerstaun' the noo."

"But you haff dell me you will make der revolution. You are Bolshevik, you dell me."

Sandy met the German's perplexed gaze stolidly.

"You pit thon money in yer pooch, Jerry, an' cleir oot. There's gaun to be anither war, is there? A' richt! I'm in it! An' God help a' you ruddy Ger-rmans!"

Herr Schmidt bowed stiffly. Then he said:—

"I salute you. You are a brave man and a foolish man. Der war dot is being fought is not wit' rifle an' machine-gun, or *minenwerfer*, or gas an' shell. No, my friendt, it is der war of der survival of der fittest."

"That's me," said Sandy. "Me an' Bessie here an' a' the rest of us. An' noo you'd better gang."

Herr Schmidt went slowly down the narrow stairs and out into the street. He did not understand even now. He sighed.

The poverty of his surroundings frightened him. White faces, sick and degenerate and drink-sodden, seen in the light of the lamps, sickened him.

A strange people. An impossible people. A great people.

He said it to himself, reluctantly. A great people.

The piper, an old, straight-backed man with a grey moustache and fierce eyes, stood in the gutter playing a dirge, a lament, that made Herr Schmidt shiver.

His thoughts leapt back through the years.

HE was a prisoner of war. With other prisoners of war, worn out, dirty, exhausted, stupid from lack of sleep and shell-fire, he sat in the mud behind barbed wire and waited the word to fall in to be marched away from the battlefield of Loos.

It was grey evening.

On the other side of the narrow road were Highlanders in kilts. A few. They, too, sat in the mud and rested.

A piper stood a little apart from the other Highlanders and played his bagpipes.

The music rose and fell sadly. Horrible music. Discordant music. Shrill. Piercing.

You heard it and you felt sick. Something stirred within you. You wanted to shed tears because men had died in battle. Brave men! You could not see, because your eyes were dim. Only barbarians could love music like that. Barbarians! Soldiers! Yes, it was the music of warriors. Warriors lamenting their dead, slain in battle.

Two soldiers in khaki were talking outside the barbed wire.

One said:—

"Thon's a' that's left o' the battalion."

Scotchmen! Barbarians talked like that!

"Aye," said the other, "that's a'! Whit fur dae they let thon dam' piper o' theirs play 'The Floo'ers o' the Forest'? They ocht to ha'e mair sense."

Private Schmidt, prisoner of war, wondered.

THE piper ended his lament with a long-drawn, quavering cry of agony. Or so it seemed to Herr Schmidt, listening in a kind of dream.

"Can ye gi'e a puir auld Royal Highlander a penny, sir?"

Herr Schmidt put a sixpenny-bit into the glengarry held out to him.

A piper stood a little apart from the other Highlanders and played his bagpipes. The music rose and fell sadly.

IN the little dark room Sandy Lucas, Bolshevik, late of the Royal Scots, stood and stared at his wife, who still sat at the table, her eyes downcast, her hands still folded in her lap, her face white and drawn.

"Bess," he said, "did I dae what was richt?"

She raised her eyes and looked at him.

"Yes, Sandy, you did what was right."

He was glad she had said that. A weight was lifted from his mind.

"We couldn't take money from a swine like that, could we?" he said.

The girl got up from her chair and went to him and flung her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"No," she said, faintly, "we couldn't have taken his money."

She hid her passion of grief and disappointment, her despair, under a wavering, wistful smile.

AN hour later Herr Schmidt sat in his private sitting room at his hotel and talked with his London agent.

He was tired. His thoughts tormented him. Not even the knowledge that in the near future vast profits would swell his already vast fortune could cheer him.

He listened mechanically to what was said, nodded his head in agreement, read and initialled several papers, and all the while struggled against a feeling that his visit to London, now drawing to a close, had been disastrous.

A long silence was broken by the agent, bland, smooth, plump, and respectful to wealth, to potential millions, millions sterling, saying:—

"Well, Herr Schmidt, if that's all you want, it's easily managed! We'll get things put in hand immediately."

Herr Schmidt frowned. He spoke English as well as any Englishman, he knew, but it wasn't easy, he discovered, now, to say what he had to say without revealing more than he should.

He said slowly:—

"But dot is not all I want. I haff a debt to pay."

His London agent inclined his head and reached for his scribbling pad.

"You'd like us to deal with it?"

"*Ja!* Dere is in London a man of der name of Lucas—here is his address—whom I haff met in France in der war. He did me a service dot I will neffer forget. You will send him a message in der morning, first ding, to say dot dere is for him a job in der gountry, by der sea. His vife is sick and she must haff der fresh air. He is to be put in charge of der pier and der warehouse dot we haff purchase. Do you combrehendt?"

"Yes, Herr Schmidt, of course. But there's no warehouse built yet; you know that, don't you?"

"*Ja.* It make no diff'rence. He will be vatchman, anyding. Dere is a cottage on der broberty. Dot is not to be pulledt down, as we gontemplatedt, but made habitable. Money is no object. You will dell Lucas dot his salary—shall we say, four pound den a week, to begin wit'? No, five pound—his salary, five pound a week, will gommence from to-day. And der sole stibulation I make is dot he shall neffer know who it is who is his embloyer. He is an *embloyé* of der gompany."

"There's just one thing," said the agent; "this man Lucas, you're sure he's a sound man, Herr Schmidt?"

"Der most soundest man in der whole worldt," said Herr Schmidt.

When I Was Young

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

No. 8

THE REV. C. A. ALINGTON, D.D.

HEAD MASTER OF ETON

I CONFESS to regarding the sub-title of this series with some aversion. There are, no doubt, some exceptional people who form what may be called "a view of life" in their early years—a view which gives consistency to their subsequent career; but they *are* quite definitely exceptions, and are to be found in the ranks of those unconventional geniuses to whom the world owes most of its progress, whether it acknowledges its debt in their lifetime or not. Ruskin, for instance, quite clearly had "a view of life" imposed upon him by his own talents and by the circumstances of his upbringing; and there are few more fascinating pages of autobiography than those in which he traces the growth of his ideas. But the ordinary boy who grows into the ordinary man has very little to tell, and the mere fact that he reaches a respectable position in a respectable profession goes far to prove that there neither is nor was anything very exceptional about his outlook on human affairs. In so far as he has anything worth saying about life it has been taught him by slow experience, and his early views have little interest beyond their crudity.

There is, I know, a type of mind which values opinions in inverse proportion to the knowledge on which they are based. If a child of ten can be induced to assure an audience that his father is a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament, his speech will be given more prominence in some sections of the Press than his father's more weighty utterance; if a film star could be induced to pronounce on the proceedings of the Church Assembly, it would be regarded as a valuable item of news. It is only on this principle that I can account for the fact that I was recently invited by an urgent telegram to suggest any possible improvements in the course of the Grand National.

I should be sorry to assume that it is from this point of view that I am invited to say what I thought of life in years when I was singularly ill qualified to think at all, and it is not in that spirit that I accept the invitation. I accept it for two reasons, first because it gives me the opportunity of paying some of the debt of gratitude which I owe to those who have taught me, and secondly because my experiences, having been so entirely normal, may suggest some useful ideas to those concerned in the education of the normal, who form, after all, a very considerable majority of the population.

I was, I believe, a very backward child; in fact, a family legend, for the truth of

which I cannot vouch, declares that an early nurse detected symptoms of definite imbecility. She prescribed the unusual remedy of hare's brains mashed up in milk, and the legend avers that her suggestion was adopted. As she was shortly afterwards dismissed for incompetence, it is to be inferred that the treatment was unsuccessful. In any case there is no doubt that I was incapable of reading till an advanced age, and that the methods employed left me quite unable to decide with accuracy whether the cat sat on the mat or the mat on the cat. Some faint interest may be held to attach to the method by which a cure was ultimately effected. I happened to come across an illustrated copy of Harrison Ainsworth's "The Tower of London," and I still (though my recollection of the events of childhood is almost incredibly dim) remember the picture which represents Renard being pushed backwards out of the window, and another of the masked headsman standing by his block. I believe, and those who know agree with my recollection, that it was this book and those pictures which incited in me a real desire to read, and that in a remarkably short space of time "The Tower of London" took the place of the detested Child's Reader. I have never read it since, but there still dwell in my memory the lines which the executioner chanted :—

The Countess of Salisbury would not die
As a great dame should, decorously,
So I lifted my axe and split her skull—
Since then the edge has been blunt and dull.

Of the other books which I read as a child I remember nothing, except "Handley Cross." This was given to me on my eighth birthday, and though I have never lived in a hunting county nor among hunting people I soon knew large quantities of it by heart, and thumbed it to such purpose that it had, unhappily, to be rebound. To neither of these reminiscences can I attach any moral, though I am in private duty bound to believe that both authors have in them elements of greatness. I was delighted to find that some words of Mr. Jorrocks occurred among the four quotations which Mr. Baldwin recently gave as forming a bond of union between all who admired them. Perhaps I may add that in a later generation I have witnessed him exercising a similar fascination over a small boy of nine.

I soon passed under the spell of Ballantyne, and shall always hold him for the prince of writers for boys. I never see "The Dog Crusoe" now, but I hope he exists, and, if he does not, hope that some enterprising publisher will resurrect him. Ballantyne had a habit of putting all the valuable information in each of his books in a single chapter, which the expert, I fear, soon learnt to skip, but at his best he was a great story-teller.

Next, but *longo intervallo*, came W. H. G. Kingston and Manville Fenn. For Henty I always felt some slight distrust, as for one who rather obviously wished to do me good. The modern boy's tastes are more catholic, and he reads more books originally designed for his elders, which, in a middle-aged way, I am disposed to regard as a pity.

One of George Cruikshank's illustrations to "The Tower of London," by Harrison Ainsworth.

"I believe that it was this book and those pictures which incited in me a real desire to read."

But it is time to turn from casual literature to something more definitely educational. Of my first private school I remember very little, with the exception of one episode which shows how long ago it happened. A small boy was publicly caned for using the word "fool," and we were forbidden to speak to him for the rest of the day. It is true that it was the head master to whom he had applied the epithet (in conversation with the matron, who reported him), but the head master explained to us that that made no difference. He was punished for the use of a forbidden word, and for that only; and I have no recollection that any of us doubted the explanation. I hasten to add that I believe I was well taught there, as I was certainly treated with great kindness, and that I have no other memories of such curious justice.

Age 11.

But it is to my second private school, Hartford House, Winchfield, that I owe my first real debt of intellectual gratitude. The head master, Mr. Lloyd, still, I am glad to say, to be found in his place on Stand D at every University match, was a great teacher, and the record of scholarships which he could boast when the school came to an end was as remarkable as that which any school could show. No doubt his methods would nowadays be called old-fashioned, but the discipline which we underwent in Latin grammar was a training quite invaluable for a boy of inaccurate mind. I believe myself that the many demands for new subjects now made on preparatory schools have injured their teaching, and that the modern tendency is to give boys a smattering of many subjects rather than a definite knowledge of any. This is due, I think, to an inconsiderate following of the doctrines of Mme. Montessori, and to the belief that no child must be taught anything which it does not want to know. As a matter of fact, though no child can be expected to "want to know" grammatical rules any more than the multiplication table, the process in skilful hands is far from unpleasant, and the sense that something definite is being really acquired has a very high educational value. The period when the memory is active should be used to the full; but to this point I will return later. For the moment I will only say that I had rather a boy between ten and thirteen was really acquiring some definite and accurate knowledge than that his "interests" were being vaguely awakened.

I do not wish to imply that we were taught nothing but classics and mathematics. Mr. Lloyd read aloud extremely well—I have a vivid recollection of the days when "King Solomon's Mines" was presented to us at tea. So deep was the impression that, when a few years afterwards I tried to write a novel, I abandoned it on discovering that, except that the scene was laid in Borneo, the characters and incidents were practically identical with those created by the genius of Rider Haggard.

From Hartford House I went on to Marlborough. My father had been a Rugbeian, but had been a master at Marlborough under Dr. Bradley for a few years. When the time came for my elder brother to go to school, Rugby was suffering a brief eclipse, soon to be dispelled, so he was sent to Marlborough, and seven years later I followed in his footsteps.

FOR Marlborough I felt, and feel, all the affection which a public school has the unique power of inspiring. The beauty of its situation, with the Downs on one side and Savernake Forest on the other, was calculated to impress even the least impressionable, and it is a very commonplace reflection that natural beauty makes an impression on a boy which he does not realize for years afterwards. The same is true of architectural beauty, and here again Marlborough was blessed in the possession of the Old Castle Inn, a building which is a perfect

example of the red brick of its time. It, with its bowling green and its yew hedges, redeemed a school then only forty years old from the reproach of novelty. The founders of new schools are fortunate indeed when, as at Stow, they can link a new foundation with the history of the country, and however little the average Marlburian might know of their memories and traditions, the Castle Inn and the old town of Marlborough, with its two maces and its memories of an early Parliament, were all the time performing this service for him.

The surroundings of Marlborough provided every opportunity for cultivating individual tastes. Archæologists could investigate the traces of the earliest Britons or their Roman successors; naturalists had as fine a field as they could desire; and even the average boy could range unhampered by "bounds" over a glorious bit of English country. I reflect with regret that the purely conventional, among whom I was numbered, did hardly anything with their spare time except play games. I am not sure whether, if I had my time again, I should have the courage to resist. I certainly had no such courage then, and my mind was consistently filled with the desire to win some colour or other, and with the alternating hopes and fears which such ambitions arouse. Games have, on the whole, added so much to the pleasure of my life that I feel it ungrateful to criticize them; but I wish that my eyes could then have been opened to all that I was missing; but as it was, games and books filled the whole of my life, and I lived, as most average boys do, in a region of unthinking happiness.

On the more strictly educational side I was very fortunate at Marlborough, but I think that fortune had a good deal to do with it. At a critical period of my life I was so happy as to come into contact with the present Bishop of Norwich, who was then teaching the Lower Sixth; he had an influence over boys which I find it hard to put into words and harder still to explain to those who did not know him. For a man whose library consisted at that time almost exclusively of the classics and of theological books (predominantly the works of Westcott) to command the whole-hearted allegiance of a boy who cared almost exclusively for literature and history was a great achievement, only to be explained by a great force of personality. I can never be grateful enough for having enjoyed his friendship as a boy. I do not suppose that, in the strict sense of the word, he "taught" me much, for I was only in his form for one term, but I am certain that he altered my entire outlook on things and people, as indeed he did for many others of my contemporaries. He was to me the first definite instance of that real friendship between boys and masters the frequency of which at the present day marks such a real change from the school conditions of half a century ago.

Age 15.

ANOTHER piece of fortune is perhaps worth recording at some length because it has a more general bearing on education. There was a system at Marlborough by which boys in the Sixth were made to go in for something called by the alluring name of "compulsory prizes." There was naturally no compulsion to win a prize, but we were constrained to make, or at least to simulate, some real effort to secure one in one of some three or four subjects. I confess to having had as a boy a real desire to secure prizes. I realize, and sympathize with, all that can be said against such a desire, or against a system which encourages it. It is quite true that it is a form of bribery, and that the desire for knowledge ought of itself to provide sufficient stimulus. I am not concerned to defend the system, but only to chronicle its effect in one particular instance.

I decided to compete for the history prize for no other reason than that I

thought it might be easier to win, and the decision affected my whole career. The book we had to read was some of Robertson's "Charles V."; the edition a most unpleasantly printed one; the author's style undistinguished to the last degree. But as I read I found myself for the first time encountering people with names like Maximilian or Rudolph of Hapsburg—names entirely different from the prosaic Georges or Williams of English history, and suggesting possibilities unrevealed by the mighty titles of Cæsar or Pericles. I read and succumbed to the fascination. From that day the reading of modern history became my favourite pursuit, and though I have never officially taught history, nor, indeed, been examined in it, except in a Fellowship examination, my happiness and, indeed, my whole intellectual career were vitally affected by this blessed accident. The moral is not remote. Much of education consists in painfully flogging an unresponsive stream, but the schoolmaster, like the fisherman, will not grudge the time wasted if he realizes that one cast may secure his fish.

Age 19.

The Upper Sixth at Marlborough was in the hands of Mr. Lewis Upcott, not the least distinguished of a distinguished family of schoolmasters, and to him Marlburians of my generation owed the priceless possession of a love of English literature. Here, again, it is permissible for a schoolmaster to draw a consolatory moral. Mr. Upcott's addresses were informal. He was at no time concerned to maintain an iron discipline, and we prided ourselves, I remember, on our inattention. But the greatness of his subject, and the sympathy of his treatment of it, achieved the result at which he aimed, and we became unconsciously, and, as it were, against our wills, enthusiastic if uncritical readers. The result was helped by the existence of a Sixth Form library in which we passed much of our days, and, though I cannot pretend that our researches were deep, we did acquire a considerable acquaintance at least with the outsides of books and a real belief in them as possible friends.

Two general reflections suggest themselves: the first, and the most obvious, that it is hard to exaggerate the effect on intelligent boys of living in close touch with a good library, and the second the extreme perverseness of the ordinary cleverish boy. To urge him to admire something is to arouse all his native combativeness (I am conscious myself of having damaged the cause of Wordsworth by over-enthusiasm); but it is a mistake to be discouraged by his rebelliousness, and to have aroused his interest is the one thing needful. "The function of a teacher," as Bishop Creighton used to say, "is to be an intellectual mustard-plaster," though all will not agree with him when he went on to add, "and his main weapons are exaggeration and paradox."

IN my school days Kipling was just beginning to appear, and debates on his merits were violent and prolonged; the more intelligent were lauding Browning to the skies, and the rest of us pretended to an admiration which we did not feel. If I may anticipate by half a-dozen years, I came to Browning by what I can only describe as instantaneous conversion. I was staying as an undergraduate at Eton with the present head master of Harrow. He went into school and I casually took down a Browning from the shelf and read "Abt Vogler." I suppose I had read it twenty times before, but for the first time I knew what his admirers meant, and though I cannot quite say "since then I have used no other," it is at least true that my allegiance has been unwavering. Even now it rouses me to unreasoning fury that the Poet Laureate should have compiled a

book called "The Nature of Man" and included no single poem of Browning, the poet who, except Shakespeare, did more to illustrate it than any other man.

My early attitude towards Tennyson is perhaps worth noting as illustrating the perverseness I mentioned just now. My family lived in the Tennyson country; he had married a connection of ours, and Tennyson traditions were commonplaces of my childhood. The effect was to rouse a paradoxical dislike of him and his works from which I have never fully recovered, though I am wise enough now to realize how much I have lost.

I learnt at this period a great deal of poetry by heart, and what I then learnt I have never forgotten. To hear "repetition" is one of the most abhorrent tasks of a schoolmaster, but it is one that should not be shirked, for to fill a boy's mind with poetry worth knowing is one of the greatest kindnesses that can be done him. I should like to air here two views which I have expanded elsewhere. The first is that a boy's love of poetry should largely be encouraged through his metrical sense—I owe a great deal to an early familiarity with Gilbert and Sullivan; and the second that he should be encouraged early to try his hand at writing verse. After all, it is a far less annoying practice than learning the piano, and may be productive of at least as much pleasure to the performer.

We took very little interest in political questions, though the Home Rule controversy was raging at the time, and none at all, so far as I can remember, in social problems. I called myself a Liberal, partly in compliment to my father, who believed in Mr. Gladstone, but mainly, I fear, because there were so few of them in the school, and it was more exciting to be in the minority. When I observe the very real interest and knowledge which the present generation of boys shows in such topics, I reflect in all sincerity how very much more intelligent they are than their fathers were.

From a religious point of view, we were as a body unthinkingly orthodox. When I hear boys nowadays criticize compulsory chapel as an enemy to religion, I remember that we used to go twice a day, and that no one, so far as I can recollect, thought it a grievance. It was not that we were specially pious, but that it was accepted as a far from unpleasant part of a social routine. I cannot remember much discussion of religious matters. The head master, Canon Bell, to whom I owe a great debt for kindness extended over many years, once delivered a course of addresses on Religious Difficulties. They seemed remote to us then, and they seem very remote indeed now when I look at the published book, and, admirable as no doubt they were, I fear their immediate result was to cause the cleverest boy of that and each successive year to pose as an atheist, as a kind of official duty. Another instance of boyish perversity.

Of my affection for Marlborough and my gratitude to it I will only say two things, and few public schoolboys will think them absurd. I remember, on the day when I left, leaning out of the window to catch the last possible view of that blessed valley of the Kennet, and I remember on my first visit as an undergraduate lying in bed and crying unashamedly that I had no longer the right to go into early school.

I WENT up to Trinity College, Oxford, in 1891, and as I look back on Oxford there are two things beyond all others for which I thank Providence. The first is the friends that I made there, and the second the influence of my Greats tutor, Charles Cannan.

Of my friends it would be impertinent to speak, but there is one reflection which is perhaps not unbecoming in a head master of Eton. I went up, as most boys from other schools do, with an undefined and unreasoned prejudice against Etonians. We thought they thought themselves inevitably superior, and we disliked the assumption. It did not take me long to discover that the generalization was as faulty as most generalizations are, and that Etonians, though curiously different in some ways from boys of other schools, are much more unlike the Etonians of popular prejudice. It would be indecent, in the light of subsequent events, for me to say more. I will only add that I found among them some of the best of friends.

Of Charles Cannan it is impossible to speak apart from the School of Literæ Humaniores, of which he was one of the greatest exponents of his time. That school I believe to be of all human instruments the best calculated to develop whatever intellectual capacity a man may possess, and at the same time to reduce, at a very necessary moment, the intellectual arrogance of the undergraduate. No man can read seriously for "Greats" without being altered by it. I have always felt that in this respect it provided something beyond anything which the Cambridge of my time could offer. To do harder and harder pieces of composition, or tackle harder and harder "unseens," is a first-rate intellectual training, and Cambridge scholarship can mock at the superficiality of Honour Moderations, but there is nothing in this to convince a man of ignorance in the way that "Greats" can.

And to be convinced of ignorance is a very necessary part of education. It was a process in which Cannan was admirably fitted to assist, and his pitiless dialectic, joined to his merciless scorn of what was cheap and shallow, was an educational instrument of the highest value.

It would no doubt be more interesting if I could say that the Oxford of my time was interested in great causes, whether lost or not, but truth compels me to state that I encountered few such movements of thought. Perhaps the 'nineties were a stagnant period, the last gasp of a dying century; perhaps the circles in which I moved were too commonplace, too purely occupied in getting themselves educated on conventional lines; perhaps it is only I who was to blame; but the fact remains that I did, and do, regard Oxford as a first-rate place for ordinary education rather than as a centre of seething thought. No doubt this is my own fault. Mr. Max Beerbohm was up at Oxford with me, and a book of his published a few years ago ("Seven Men") convinces me of my own blindness. It is a horrid thing, for instance, to read that "in the Summer Term of '93 a bolt from the blue flashed down on Oxford," and to realize that one was in Oxford then and quite unconscious of the meteoric advent of Mr. Will Rothenstein, and of all that it quite obviously meant to all intelligent undergraduates. But Mr. Beerbohm exists to inculcate humility, and I have not the least doubt that he is in the right of it and that I was obtusely in the wrong.

Age 20.

There were not many outstanding figures in the Oxford world as I knew it. Jowett was just passing; Freeman was at the end of his career, and Froude when he took his place was too old to make a sensation. Charles Gore at the Pusey House was the outstanding feature of the religious life of the place, and I am one of the many who owe much to him. Perhaps I may state in passing, in view of the common belief that "Greats" upsets religion, that the first time that I took any serious interest in the subject was when I found, or seemed to find, that T. H. Green, in whom we were taught to believe, arrived by a very different road at the same conclusions which Dr. Pollock had shown to me as reached by Westcott *viâ* the tenses of the New Testament.

On the whole my impression of the Oxford teachers of my day is that they were extremely efficient, but, with rare exceptions, uninspiring.

I have said that I was conscious of no "movements." A few of us toyed with Socialism, Christian or otherwise, and I remember forming one of an audience which cheered Tom Mann to the echo when he urged the taxation to extinction of unearned increment. He was surprised and perhaps a little sceptical of our enthusiasm; perhaps he was justified.

There were no doubt undergraduates whose vision reached beyond Oxford. F. E. Smith at the Union must already have been dreaming of triumphs at the Bar; Lionel Curtis was beginning to revolve large and prophetic schemes; Lawrence Binyon was already publishing poems classical in perfection; but I repeat, apologetically if necessary, that I was not, even then, full of those views of life which the readers of this paper have a right to expect. There is an old quatrain which adjures the youthful student:—

Learn as fast as thou may and can,
For our Bishop is an old man;
And therefore thou must learn fast
If thou wilt be Bishop when he is past.

It is hard in these days to imagine that anyone is really anxious to be a bishop, but even without that very dubious prospect it is legitimate to feel that "when you are young" the best thing you can do with your brains is to develop them. I think the Oxford of my day helped me in this laudable object, and I can imagine no more unexceptionable sentiment with which a schoolmaster could conclude an account of his youth.

(*Next month: Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole.*)

The GIRL who BORROWED THREE HA'PENCE

TOWARDS seven o'clock the Oban-bound train drew up at a small platform overhung by woody vegetation, and to the senses of Ronald Markard, seated at an open window, the air, which had been warm in its motion, was hot in its stillness. It was a summer evening that might truthfully enough be called tropical; in that little station hid in a trough of the hills the panting of the engine's Westinghouse was a sound symbolic.

On the platform were a couple of gillies, prospective passengers, an official embodying the functions of station-master, porter, booking clerk, and ticket-collector, and a girl who appeared to be looking for someone

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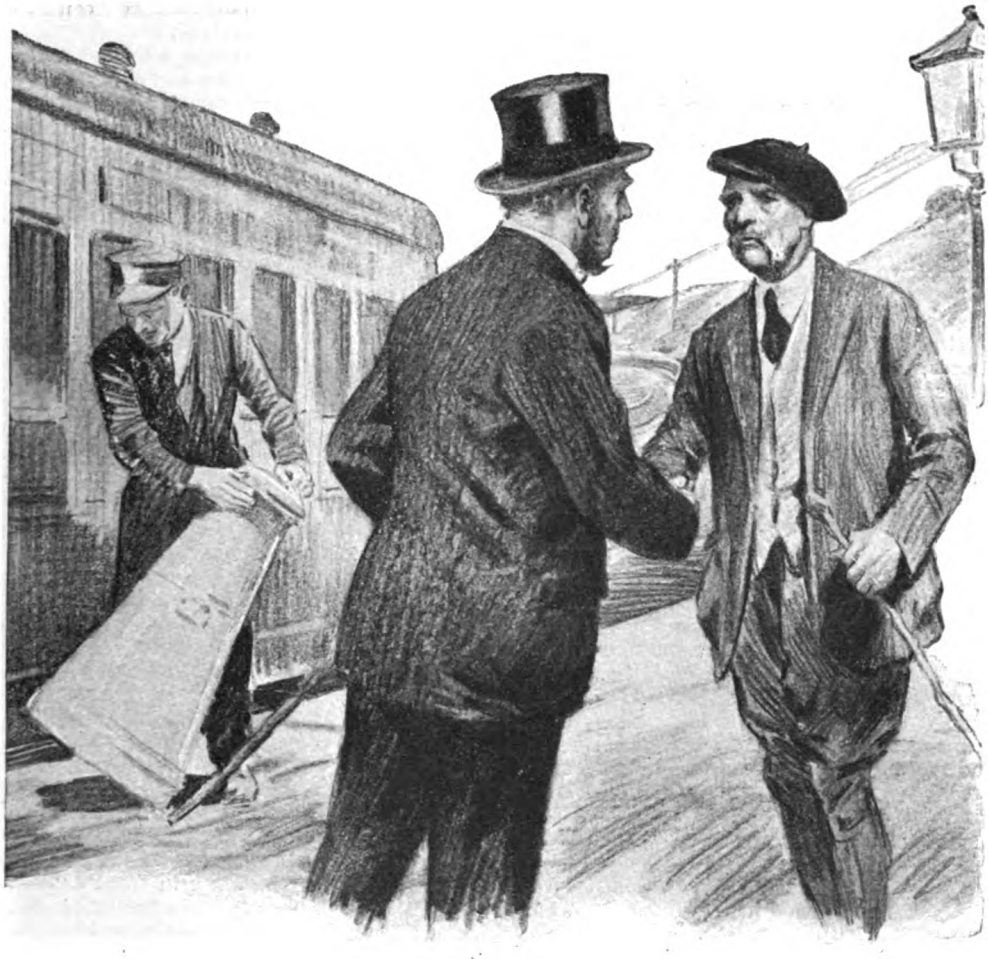


By

J.J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

in the train. Ronald Markard had noted that her nut-brown hair was bobbed, not shingled, that her colouring was alluring with its tan, that she wore a rough dark skirt and a jumper of washed-out blue—when the black-coated man, who had been dozing on the seat opposite, got up, grabbed most of his belongings, and made for the door. His manner of brushing past Ronald seemed rude in the extreme, but Ronald put it down to his being but half-awake, and offered to hand out his bag, which appeared to be heavy. Without a sign that he had heard, the other opened the door, descended, and received his bag with a grunt, presumably of thanks. A big, bulky man, with dark beard beginning to turn grizzled, of dull, heavy countenance, he had already struck Ronald as the most uncouth-looking and unprepossessing parson he had ever seen. And now, as the girl came forward, unsmiling recognition in her dark eyes, there leapt up in Ronald's mind the oddly irrelevant wish—"Surely she is not his daughter!"

They shook hands limply. The girl said nothing.

"Well," said the minister, the word having no apparent meaning; and in the

pause set down the bag and looked around him. "Where's Duncan?" he asked, curtly.

"He must have forgotten. His wife was taken ill in the night," the girl answered. "I'll find a boy to carry it home." Her glance strayed up to the window, met Ronald's, and turned aside.

"You'll do nothing of the sort. I'm not made of sixpences. And I want a talk with McIver—ah, there he comes." He turned his broad back upon her, shooting over his shoulder—to Ronald it seemed as though he spat the words:—

"You're fit enough to earn your keep, aren't you?"

Ronald saw the clenching of the girl's hands, the deepening of her colour; and the same things happened to himself. He snatched up a magazine.

The minister strode across the platform and at the gate shook hands with an elderly man, by his looks a farmer. For a moment they talked, then started to mount the hill together. The girl, downcast, lingered uncertainly. One would have guessed that she was willing enough to leave the scene of her affront, yet not to tread on the heels of the affronter. Suddenly she threw up her head, squared her shoulders, and lifted the bag. Ronald watched her pass through the gate, and, a few yards beyond, pause to transfer the burden from her right hand to her left. In the heart of the young man indignation boiled up. And just then the train, with a jerk, resumed its journey and——

Ronald was on the platform, making for the gate.

"Your ticket, sir!" The station-master's soft Highland tones held wonderment, perhaps a little suspicion.

Ronald halted, found and showed the paste-board.

"But this ticket will be from London to Oban, sir, and this will not be Oban."

"Can't I break my journey here?"

"Yes—oh, yes—but——" This passenger who had so unexpectedly alighted had not even a cap to his head!

"I'm going on with the next train. I'll see you later," said Ronald, and ran out.

"The next train," called the station-master, "will not be due till three-fifteen a.m."

The announcement pulled up Master Eagerness, but only for an instant. "D——n!" he muttered, gave a short laugh at himself, and proceeded.

The girl had not made great progress. Though a well-made specimen of young womanhood, she seemed to be finding it a hill of difficulty. Again she halted to transfer the burden. Going softly on the turf bordering the dry, gravelly road, Ronald came up with her. If he breathed faster than usual, it could hardly have been due to that brief bodily exertion.

"Please," he said, raising his hand to the cap which was not there—"oh, Lord!—pardon—please let me carry it."

Doubtless because she recognized the witness to her recent affront her colour deepened once more; but she answered coolly: "Thank you, but I don't require help."

Ronald was not naturally a forward young man; but having taken one step, he usually held his ground, or tried to take another.

"I was not offering help, but asking a favour," he said. "It would hurt any man to see you carrying that bag, and I happen to know that it is a heavy one, because I handed it from the train to the—er—gentleman."

"Thank you again, but I am quite able to carry it myself."

"Did I say you were not?" he asked, gently, almost reproachfully. "But would not it be a gracious thing to allow me to carry it? And need I assure you that the favour, if granted, does not mean that I shall address you further, or even walk beside you?"

With a small sigh she set down the bag. Regarding it, she said: "I—I think you mean to be kind." Her voice faltered, and for a distressful moment he feared she was going to cry. Then she threw up her head as she had done on the station platform, and faced him frankly. "Yes; I'll be ever so much obliged; but I should warn you that there's nearly a mile to go."

"Thank you," said Ronald, taking up the bag. "Will you walk in front?"

At that she smiled faintly. "If you walked behind, I should feel that I had to pay you for your trouble, and, like my stepfather, I am not made of sixpences. Of course," she went on, with a look which brought into the young man's mind the word "brave," "of course you heard what he said to me?"

"Yes," he replied simply, "I heard."

"I did not want you to have to pretend that you had not heard," she said, quietly. "At the same time, while it was humiliating, sympathy would be more so. Shall we go on?"

THEY fell into step and for a while were silent. Then Ronald, shifting the bag to his left hand, remarked:—

"I don't mind admitting that it weighs as if it were stuffed with lead."

"Books," she returned; "heavy in both senses—but my stepfather's chiefest joy." Her tone changed. "We are nearly at the top of the hill. On the level we should get a breeze. I hope this is not taking you too

much out of your way. You are staying with friends in the neighbourhood, I suppose ? "

" Well, no," he replied, carefully. " I'm bound for Oban, to join some friends on a yacht. But the sight of this little place took my fancy, and I thought I'd take a look round and go on to Oban by the next train."

" But there is no train till three in the morning ! "

" My mistake, and so the station-master informed me." And here Ronald forgot to be cautious. " However, I dare say the people at the inn will give me a room, though I have no luggage—not even a hat."

" But there isn't an inn within sixteen miles."

" I say ! " It was certainly disconcerting to a young man with a taste for comfort and a normal appetite. But he pulled himself together and laughed. " Well, it looks like being a fine night, and there's the heather."

" But your luggage — was it on the train ? "

" So it was. I must get the station-master to wire Oban about it—and my friends, too, of course. Isn't the breeze delicious ? "

The girl did not respond. There was a wrinkle between her brows.

" Would you mind if I put down the bag to light a cigarette ? " he said.

She nodded absently and halted. She was a pretty girl, but she was not dense. Young men of her companion's sort, brisk and debonair, did not on the spur break journeys and appointments with friends for the sake of a bit of Highland scenery. But just because she was not dense she could not flatter herself that her prettiness had had anything to do with it. Such an impulse of admiration might have amused, if it did not altogether gratify, her. But now she was wounded in pride, though possibly touched a little at heart also, for, all circumstances considered, there was but one impulse that could have sent him after her—pity !

HE watched her, wondering why she frowned, yet finding charm in her features—the sweetly-turned chin, the rather sadly-curved mouth, the straight, short nose. All the girls he had fancied he loved had had straight, short noses ; beauty for him was not in other types ; but now, surely, he had discovered the absolutely perfect example ! And those dark eyes looking past him, as if seeking something on the distant moors—they were troubled. Why ?

In the same moment the brave look came back.

" If you are rested," she said, the least thing provokingly, " shall we go on ? "

" I can go faster if you wish," he said, resuming his load.

" I am not going to add injury to insult," she returned, lightly. " Besides, there is no need to overtake my stepfather and his ruling elder."

" Your stepfather would disapprove of my butting in ? "

She gave a little shrug. " More likely of my accepting your kind help. But it would not matter either way." With a quick change of tone : " May I hope that you are finding the scenery all your fancy painted it ? "

" I seem to detect a hint of mockery in the question," he replied ; " but those moors and mountains are well worth a break of journey."

" I wonder if you will say so at three in the morning ? "

" You may count on my saying so then—if it doesn't rain," he said ; and somehow she liked him for the answer.

" It won't rain to-night, and there will be no real darkness," she told him. " Still, you must have a roof over you, for a few hours at least—and, of course, you must have supper." Once more he saw the adorable deepening of the tan, but something in her expression bade him turn away. " I regret it is not possible," she went on, " to invite you to our house, and I know I'm disgracing the traditions of Highland hospitality, but——"

" Please ! " he interrupted, gently. " I'm quite equal to looking after myself. I dare say——"

" But if you will go to the station-master's house and mention my name—Miss Lennox—to the station-master's wife, she will do her best for you."

" Thank you very much. After all, I might sleep too well on the heather, and miss my train. You see, I left London this morning at five——"

" London ! " she exclaimed, and repeated it softly, like an echo : " London ! Do you live there ? "

" I live at Hampstead."

" And I lived in Kensington for three years." She drew a long breath. " To think of your being in London this very morning ! "

" Well," said Ronald, smiling, " it isn't really so very far away."

" It's the whole world away for me." She made a sorry little grimace. " But why talk of what is gone for good ? "

" Then you liked living in London ? "

" I loved it. It was life—though, indeed, you would probably think my existence there a dull one. I was merely a governess

to two little girls, and knew very few people, and could not afford to go about much—and yet——"

"Aren't you going back?" he ventured, after a pause.

"No." She appeared about to say more, but checked herself, and there was a silence that lasted till Ronald once more shifted his burden.

"I'm ashamed of having let you do it," she said. "But it's all downhill now. You will see the house when we get round that hillock. Your labours will soon be over."

"Righto!" Ronald returned, cheerfully, and it pleased her better than if he had offered the obvious cheap compliment. "Miss Lennox," he said presently, "may I tell you my name?"

"I should be glad to know whom I have to thank," she answered, not too primly.

He told her, adding: "Civil engineer and casual porter, at your service." And for no earthly reason he laughed. But his laughter was infectious; and when two young people, for no earthly reason, laugh together, a certain little god wakes up and takes notice.

Yet for the remainder of the walk the girl, though not precisely constrained, seemed to be on her guard, and her escort learned nothing further concerning her.

"This is where I live," she said, coming to a stop at the gate of a garden planted mostly with evergreens, beyond which stood a two-storey house, severely grey and square, with dark hangings in its small windows. The whole gave Ronald a feeling of joylessness and remoteness.

He set down the bag with real reluctance.

"The Castle of Giant Despair," she said, with a hard, short laugh. Next instant she was wearing the brave look, and saying: "Thank you very much, Mr. Markard. But for you I should still have been struggling along that hot road." She held out her hand.

Questions surged. Impetuously he began: "Miss Lennox, can't I——"

"Please!" she whispered, with a gesture of appeal.

The door of the house had opened. From the gloom within sounded a man's voice—peremptory, educated, but rough:—

"Rosamond!"

"Good-bye." There was that in her eyes—a request intensely piteous—which no man could have disregarded—for silence and quick departure; and Ronald, the comedy gone from the adventure, turned and went.

HE was made welcome by the station-master's wife, a wiry little woman from the East Coast, brisk and capable, with a tongue that fairly vibrated. The last train for the South had departed, she informed him, ten minutes ago, and her husband had gone off with his rod—Hector was fair daft for the fishing—and would not be home for hours; he was not on duty for the early morning train for the North, its guard doing the little required on the platform. But she had a key of the office and would at once wire Oban about the gentleman's belongings, also try to get a message sent to the yacht. And then she would see to the gentleman's supper. Would he kindly step into the parlour?

Ronald found himself in a little room so old-fashioned, clean, and orderly that it might have been in a glass case for fifty years. Its atmosphere was full of the warm, sleepy scent of geraniums. But he was in no humour for observing details, and in the hair-cloth easy chair, with its blue and yellow antimacassar, he gave himself up to vain questionings. Of only two things was he certain: this girl was desperately unhappy, and he greatly desired to help her.

At nine o'clock his hostess set before him a homely repast, whose only fault was in its abundance. It included bacon enough for two strong men and a quartette of eggs. Ronald, too tired to have much appetite, winced at the sight; but *noblesse oblige*.

"Won't you sit down and drink a cup of tea with me?" he said. "I'd feel more at home if you poured out."

The little woman, delighted, fetched more of her best china, and presently her nimble tongue was doing its utmost.

"You will be an old friend of Miss Rosamond's, sir?"

"Well, hardly an old friend," was the discreet reply.

"You would know her when she was in London, maybe?"

Ronald let it pass, remarking that he had not yet met her people.

The station-master's wife's lips came together; her eyelids drooped; and she gave a slight sniff. Plainly she did not think much of Miss Rosamond's people. With much circumspection Ronald encouraged her to speak of them. Her remarks may, without sacrificing their value, be drastically condensed.

"Miss Rosamond's mother was a nice lady before she married the minister, but now she is just a nothing—under his thumb all the time. But I am not blaming her too much. Her first husband left her badly off, and so she just had to take another man. That would be three years ago, and soon after the marriage Miss Rosamond went to London. She is very clever at foreign tongues, and she went to be governess in the house of a gentleman, an acquaintance of the minister's.

Hector once heard tell that he was a very wealthy gentleman. Miss Rosamond came home once a year, but only for a few days. Still, I could see that she was well content with her place in London. But when she came home at the last New Year, I could see it was different, and she has been here ever since. And everybody knows that the minister was wild at her coming home. He met her at the station, and Hector says, if he did not curse and swear at her, he looked all the bad words in the Bible."

"That's awful!" muttered Ronald.

"Yes, sir; it's just awful; and her a young thing, with nothing in her but sweetness. I don't know what the man is angry at, and I don't care, and it isn't any business of mine; but he's too hard a man to be a minister. I suppose he married to get a housekeeper cheap, and didn't want a daughter. And I'm thinking he starves them both."

"What?"

"Sir, they live on hardly anything up yonder—he needs all his money for buying books. He's mad for books—rotten old books, too! Hector declares the man would sell his immortal soul, and the kirk itself, for books! Aye, and I wouldna wonder if he would sell Miss Rosamond! There was a gentleman came to the manse in February—not a young gentleman like you—oh, near twice your age, sir!—and bided three days; and Duncan, the minister's man, heard something he shouldna have heard—and I'd best not repeat it in case Duncan heard wrong. But there it is, and Miss Rosamond eating her heart out here, though she pretends she's cheery. And maybe I've said more than I ought to a stranger, but I'm trusting you, sir, seeing you're a friend of Miss Rosamond's."

HE was smoking a cigarette at the door when his hostess, having cleared the table, came to him.

"Now you must be tired, sir; so I will make you a bed on the sofa, and you will get a few hours' rest, and I will set the alarum for half-past two, and there will be a cup of tea ready for you, and——"

"Thank you, thank you; but I'm not going to trouble you further. I'm going to spend the few hours on the moors—I've never had such a chance before—and shall find my way back to the station in good time."

It was evident that she thought him a little crazy, and she was quite plainly hurt when she found she could not dissuade him. She had her revenge in refusing to accept any payment for the supper.

"Oh, no, there is no charge," she said, stiffly. "It was for Miss Rosamond."

However, in the end they parted good friends, and it is not recorded that Mrs. Station-master incontinently destroyed the Treasury note she found blooming on a geranium plant in the window.

Ronald followed the road he had already trodden. It was cooler now, though far from chilly, and the breeze just sufficient to prevent the activities of midges. On coming in sight of the manse he took to the moors, ascended a hundred yards or so, and made

"This is where I live," she said. "Thank you very much, Mr. Markard. But for you I should still have been struggling along that hot road."

himself comfortable on the heather. Where he lay he was in full sight of the gaunt, grey house; yet it would have taken a searching eye there to detect his presence. Why he should have come to this place, he could not have explained even to himself. Perhaps he had indulged a hope of finding her on the road, going homeward, but he had no expectation of seeing her start on an excursion at that hour. Yet he gazed at the house as though by taking thought he might draw her forth.

It would be too much to say that he was already in love with the girl, but his mind was full of her, and the sudden idea that she was in love with someone in London annoyed him in a measure that seemed unreasonable, on the basis of a mere twenty minutes' acquaintance. But the heart may know its own folly, and Ronald Markard had sense of humour enough to laugh at himself even while he gazed. With the falling of dusk the breeze failed, and Ronald became enveloped in a stillness, drowsy, almost enervating. A light shone palely from one of the upper windows. He watched it with heavy-lidded eyes, wondering whether it were hers, wishing impossible things. The dusk deepened. . . .

HE came to himself with a start. What time was it? He looked at his watch. Why, only midnight! There was a strange clarity about the dusk. He could see the house quite plainly. The lamp still burned in the upper room, and his thoughts once more fastened themselves on the girl. And then the lamp went out. He sighed as though something desired had been taken away. But still he gazed.

And, with another start, he saw a figure emerge from the doorway. It came down the garden, opened the gate carefully, crossed the road, and began to ascend the moor.

"Rosamond!" Under his breath he uttered the name grown familiar in half a night.

She came up a little way, was lost in a dip of the ground, reappeared, and proceeded deliberately towards the spot where he lay. All at once he was faced by the astounding fact that she was aware of his presence. He scrambled to his feet.

"Miss Lennox!"

"Yes, Mr. Markard." Her voice had the calmness which suggests restraint. "I was afraid," she said, drawing near, "you might be gone before I could get out. Before that I was afraid you might have decided to stay at the station-house."

She was beside him before he found words. "It—it is kind of you——" he began.

"Not at all," she interrupted, with a faint, ironic smile. "A little while ago you offered your help; now I have come to ask it. You think me forward?"

"I think you honour me," he answered, an odd thrill at his heart. "What can I do?"

She was looking back at the house. "Mr. Markard, did you happen to notice a light down there?"

"Yes."

"By any chance did you notice when it went out?"

"Almost at the same time as you came out."

"Ah! Would you mind if we sat down? The light was in my stepfather's study. As a rule he sits much later than this. I fancy he heard me go downstairs and is now watching from the window. We are less visible sitting down." She paused and, with the brave look, added: "Please don't think I'm afraid of him, but I hate being humiliated."

Her brown hand plucking at the heather a few inches from his tempted him.

"What can I do?" he asked again.

"It's even more difficult than I thought it would be," she said, slowly; then, abruptly, "Mr. Markard, tell me honestly why you left the train."

He hesitated.

"You pitied me—wasn't that it? Please be straight with me."

"Yes," he replied. "But if I could make clear to you the—the quality of the pity, I don't believe you would resent it."

"I don't resent it—now. I'm a pitiable person in a pitiable position. But I'm glad you have been straight with me, and I must try to be straight with you. Only it's not easy to explain just how I come to be seeking your help."

"Miss Lennox, there is no need for any explanation. Just tell me what I can do."

"You are good. But unless I explain, my request must strike you as absurd, perhaps even funny, and—and—somehow—I can't face your amusement." There was no brave look now.

"There's no man in the world would be amused at you," he said, warmly. "Come, trust me a little. Tell me in the fewest words possible."

Her hands were twisting a sprig of heather. "Mr. Markard, will you——" Her voice failed.

"Yes?" he said, encouragingly.

"Will you"—a long breath—"lend me three ha'pence?" Her hands went to her face.

For a bare instant, despite his own gallant words, he wondered if she were mocking him. Then, fairly naturally, he answered: "With pleasure, Miss Lennox."

"For my own sake I want you to understand how I could do what I have done to-night. Will you listen?" she asked.

One of her hands went into her jumper and brought out a letter. "Or, rather, will you put a stamp on this, and post it in Oban in the morning?"

"Certainly."

"And trust me to repay you some day?"

"Of course."

"I think," she said, with a little sob, "I think you have saved me. But, oh, I am ashamed!"

"Now," said Ronald, "that, I grant you, is absurd." He put the letter in his pocket. "Is this really all I can do?"

"Hush! Don't move!" she whispered. "I heard the window open. But it's not so clear now, and perhaps he doesn't see us."

Through the holy stillness came, like a blasphemy, the sound of a man's coarse voice:—

"Rosamond!"

A pause.

"Must you go?" said Ronald.

She threw up her head. "No!"

Again—"Rosamond!"

She gave that little shrug of hers. "Isn't there something awfully insulting in his tone? Happily we have no near neighbours."

"If that man comes up here," he said, hotly, "I'll surely——"

"I should not try to prevent you," she said. "No, I didn't mean that. After all, he's my mother's husband—poor mother!—and, somehow, she believes in him. But I don't expect he will take the trouble to come out. See, he is lighting the lamp again!"

"But, Miss Lennox, won't this mean trouble for you? Can't I do anything?"

"Please, don't worry about it."

"But I must worry! Can't you get away—break away—from all this?"

"Yes, I shall soon be free—thanks to you."

He stared at her. She was smiling.

"It seems too good to be true," she went

on, "but three days hence, thanks to you, Mr. Markard, I shall be safe in London!"

"What on earth have I got to do with it?"

"You are lending me three ha'pence."

Ronald put his hand to his head—and for the first time heard her soft happy laugh.

"You must let me explain, after all," she said. "Indeed, I feel now that I want to explain. For my own sake I want you to understand just how a nice girl—and I am a nice girl—really—could do what I have done to-night. Will you listen?"

"If it pleases you to tell me——"

"Very well! It isn't a long story. As I told you, I was governess in Kensington for three years. It wasn't fortune-making, but I lived in a beautiful home, loved the two kiddies and their mother, and met some people with ideas worth while. For almost the whole time I was perfectly content. Then the mother died, and just before she went I learned that nearly all her married life had been unhappy. Perhaps I ought to have left then, but the two little girls needed me, and I needed them. So I stayed on. And—and two months after his wife's death the man began to make—— Well, that made it impossible, and one night I wired to my mother and took the train home. I had just money enough to pay the fare. I got here with a shilling left, and, not thinking of the future, I gave it to the boy who took up my luggage. That was in January, and, Mr. Markard, since then I have never touched so much as a penny-piece. At first my mother would give me a stamp for a letter, but soon that was stopped."

"Your stepfather?" murmured Ronald.

With a nod, she continued: "He was furious, not so much at my coming home as at my throwing away what he called a most excellent opportunity. You see, there was a sort of friendship between him and the man, who was extremely well off, and now I can't help suspecting my stepfather of ulterior motives. But in the beginning of the year I did not grasp the meaning of what was going on. It was when I found I could not get the smallest sum of money for any purpose that I began to understand my position. Without money I was a prisoner in this little place. I could not go away to find another situation—and I do know enough languages to have found one fairly easily. I could not send an advertisement to the newspapers, or even a letter to an agency. And hope seemed to go out when weeks had passed and the girl who had been my best friend in London never wrote. Then, in February, the—the man came to visit us, and it became obvious to me that I was a prisoner until I changed my mind."

"D——n!" said Ronald, very softly.

"Thank you, Mr. Markard. Well, you may be sure that I made all sorts of wild plans for getting away, only to come up against the empty purse. There was no one in the neighbourhood whom I could think to ask, especially as I could make no definite promise of repayment. And so it went on until to-night, when you—you pitied me." She held up her hand. "There's more—the second part of the story—but it won't take long. Just after I left you this evening, my stepfather told me that the man would arrive on Friday morning. I could have cried with the helplessness of it all; only I don't cry readily, and certainly not in the open air. So I walked out of the house—and almost into the arms of the postman—a new one, a young man, who was much earlier than the old one would have been. He had a letter from my friend in London. She forgave me for not answering her previous letters, and told me of a situation I could have, if I were ready to take it. The salary was good, my expenses to London would be paid, and if I wrote saying 'yes,' she would forward the money, if I needed it, at once, and——"

"And here," cried Ronald, smiting his breast, "is your letter accepting! I *am* glad!"

"And if you had not broken your journey because you pitied me——" She turned away, plucking at the heather.

IT was on Ronald's honest tongue to say that she might have risked posting the letter without a stamp; but it does not fall to the lot of every young man to find himself a sort of hero—even a three-ha'penny one—and the indiscretion was suppressed.

"Now let us see!" he said, with a business-like air. "This is Tuesday night, or, rather, Wednesday morning. The letter will reach your friend on Thursday morning, and you should have her reply on Friday——"

"I'm afraid it will be Friday evening."

"And the gentleman from Kensington arrives in the morning. That's a pity!"

"I must try to endure. You see, the money arriving so late, I can't get a train till the Saturday morning." She sighed. "It's not going to be so easy, with the two of them on the watch. Of course I shall get away—but, as I've said, I do hate scenes. They leave me hating everything."

Ronald rubbed his chin—a trifle rough it had become, he thought, for a lady's company—and blessed the kindly dusk. "Couldn't you get your friend to wire the money on Thursday, early?"

She shook her head. "I've grown so suspicious since I've learned of my friend's letters, which I never received. I can't trust even the local post-office. If my stepfather got the wire—horrid thought, isn't it? In

fact, I've asked my friend to send her reply under cover to the station-master's wife."

"Well, look here," said Ronald. "Suppose that you're a man, or that I'm a girl, and let me advance——"

"No, no, no! You are a——" she nearly said "a dear"!—"you are a good, kind man, but I will not owe you more than three ha'pence."

"Please!" he pleaded. "Do let me help you to escape a meeting with that beastly blighter."

She shook her head till the short hair danced distractingly.

And it was probably at this point that the little god already mentioned allowed that it was perhaps worth while to look to his bow. For there was a long silence, during which these two must have had long, long thoughts.

"What is the time?" she asked at last.

"Nearly one."

She hesitated. "I'm a coward, after all," she said; "I don't want to go in till that light goes out for good. D–do you mind?"

"Mind!" he cried joyfully, and—confound it!—yawned capaciously.

"If you're not too frightfully tired," she said kindly, "please talk about London."

To oblige her he would have talked of any place on the map. Incidentally, he told her something of himself. Later they discussed all manner of things. They applied the method of intensive culture to friendship. Neither noticed when the lamp's light went out. It was the light of nature that warned them.

They rose rather stiffly, dew-drenched, somewhat haggard, yet a presentable enough pair of clean, gallant young people. But, somehow, they had become formal, almost awkward.

"I hope you may get away comfortably on Saturday," he said.

"I hope you will have a lovely yachting cruise," she returned. "And thank you again. I will return the money as soon as I get to London." She touched her breast, where she had put his card, and sighed.

He sighed also, then turned aside to cover a yawn. They stood waiting—for what?

Faintly, and still miles away, arose a sound not of nature.

"The train!" she cried. "You must run."

A clasp—"Good-bye"—"Good-bye."

She watched him scramble down the heather, reach the road, arrive at a turn. There he waved his hand, and was gone. Her smile died. A frown came.

"Goodness me, what a stupid silly I am! Lydia knows my writing. It didn't really need a stamp!" But presently, it would seem, she forgave her own stupidity.

At five o'clock, from the train, Ronald saw Oban Bay lying asleep in a sunny, misty veil. He thought he recognized his friend's big white yacht; a dream ship in the haze. Well, he would post the letter, obtain possession of his belongings, and find a boatman to put him on board.

He took out the letter and a book of stamps.

"Rosamond!" he muttered. Was there a lovelier name in all the world? He saw her as he had left her on the moor. He thought of her waiting in anxiety and impatience, perhaps, too, in humiliation, for her friend's reply. And cruising away among the Hebrides, he would have no certainty of the waiting's being happily ended.

"Rosamond!" He affixed a stamp and sat gazing at the letter, seeing her face. "Rosamond!"

The train came to rest.

"Porter," said Ronald, "when is the first train for the South?"

"Six-twenty."

And by that train Ronald travelled, falling asleep to a little refrain of his own composing—"Going to beat His Majesty's mails!"

At Glasgow, where he changed stations, he had a telegram dispatched to the address on the letter; and ten hours later he stepped out at St. Pancras.

Shortly after seven on Thursday evening the station-master's wife called at the manse, asked for Miss Rosamond, and gave her a letter. Whereupon Miss Rosamond was astounded.

"How could Lydia reply so quickly? And no stamp! How did it come to you?"

"It came by the train, miss. Hector brought it in to me." The station-master's wife was, for once, a woman of few words.

"Then Lydia must have got mine last night. But how?"

"You'll excuse me running away, miss. I'm extra busy to-night—ironing."

"Yes, yes. It was awfully good of you to bring me this so quickly."

And while the woman went down the road, feeling a little guilty, mainly because of a Treasury note recently arrived, Rosamond crossed over to the moors and in a hidden hollow tore open the envelope. This is a transcription—abridged—of the letter:

"You poor dear! Thank Heaven the worst is past. The job is yours, and I'm sure you'll like it. The man is a gentleman, his wife a real good sort, the kids

lovely. Here is the money, and I've added a trifle of my own in case you're short. Pay back when you can. No hurry. I'm doing pretty well just now with my slushy love-tales. But listen! You must get away before that old pig arrives. I've been looking up trains, and you can catch the six-twenty from Oban on Friday morning, and be in my arms in the evening. Only you must not risk boarding the train at your place. Take no chances. I am arranging for a car from Oban to be near your house at three a.m. Have your luggage ready, hop on board, and adieu to misery!

"Nuff sed.

"LYDIA."

Rosamond sat up and wiped her eyes. "Oh, I'm so glad he pitied me," she said to herself. "At least, I suppose I ought to be glad it was pity."

And then she began to think.

A DISMAL morning in Oban. Mist like a blanket and steady, fine rain. The train was due to start in seven minutes. Rosamond in her corner closed her eyes. She was experiencing the reaction. Yet there had been nothing sensational about her flight. She had got away from the house at the hour appointed, without the slightest mishap. The chauffeur, a kindly elderly man, had been at hand to carry her luggage. The run to Oban had been all luxury and beauty—even after the rain started; and before she knew, she was in an hotel where breakfast was served to her. She had felt she ought to refuse the car and the breakfast; yet, somehow, she could not. It was her pride against her heart, and her pride had failed her. She could not, deliberately, hurt him. "But he should not have done it; he should not have done it!" was the burden of her thoughts.

And suddenly, as it seemed, he was there, at the window.

"Believe me, I couldn't help coming to speak to you," he said. "I've been watching you for ages. Well," he went on in lighter tones, "I hope you get away quite comfortably——"

"Mr. Markard," she interrupted, "how did you know that I was leaving a day earlier than we planned, and travelling by this train? And did you really expect me to believe that my friend Lydia would, of her own accord, think of the motor-car?"

He looked so taken aback that she could have laughed; but she managed to say, gravely:—

"You ought not to have done it. I couldn't be so ungracious as to refuse your kindness, after the immense trouble you had taken; but such generous pity as yours is apt to hurt, and——"

"Pity? Nonsense!" He drew himself up. "It was simply that I couldn't stand the thought of your living in that unhappy house a minute longer than was necessary."

"Well, and wasn't that pity?"

He looked at her until she was forced to meet his eyes. And whatever she saw in them was certainly not pity.

In some confusion she said: "Anyway, you might have considered that it was bad enough for me to owe you the three ha'pence."

"But you don't really owe me three ha'pence. Your friend, Miss Lydia, said she would soak off the stamp for me."

"That's mean of you, because I could have repaid the three ha'pence; but the other things——"

"Miss Lennox, don't rub it in! It has been my life's one adventure and—the train starts in a minute. Let's talk of the weather."

She smiled in spite of herself. "I hope it will soon clear up for your yachting cruise," she said, and saw him redden. "Oh, don't tell me you have spoiled your holiday!"

"As a matter of fact," he said, solemnly, "I took a sudden dislike to the sea, cancelled the engagement, and the yacht sailed on Wednesday. And—well, I've postponed the holiday."

"You are going back to London? How dreadful!"

"I can quite well travel by a later train."

"You know I didn't mean that, Mr. Markard. I meant it was dreadful that——"

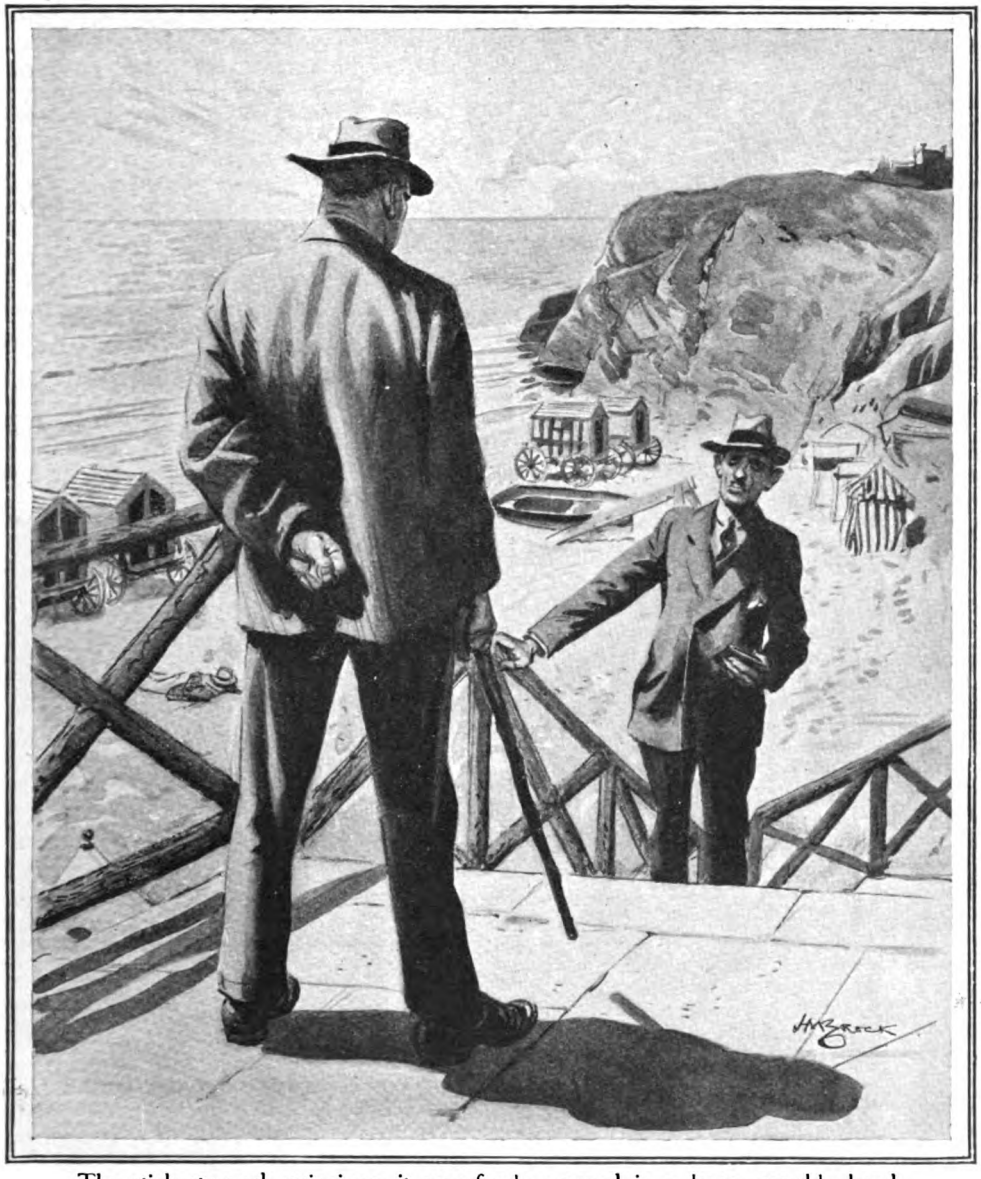
A whistle screamed. It would seem that a question may be asked and answered without words; for as the train moved Ronald snatched open the door and sprang in.

"But your things?" cried the girl.

"Not lost, but left behind." And he sat down and laughed like the happiest man in the world.

IT is generally supposed that the little god aforesaid travels only by air, on his own wings. But this is not so. Occasionally he goes by railway, and for all we know may be perched on the luggage-rack, twanging a little secret tune on his bow-string, and biding his time.

At all events, Rosamond admits that it began on the train, though Ronald declares that, for his part, it positively happened when she borrowed the three ha'pence.



The stick stopped swinging; it was firmly grasped in a large, capable hand. Sam dropped the jaunty air and began to whine.

I was in the police!" he chuckled, slapping his knee.

His laughter awakened Mr. Jebb.

Mr. Jebb sat up, rubbed his eyes, looked at his watch, gave an exclamation of annoyance, and ran up the steps as fast as his ponderous bulk would permit. To miss a meal was in Mr. Jebb's eyes to commit one of the cardinal sins.

As he got to the top, the man in the shelter held out the wallet.

"I say, sir, is this yours?"

"Mine? God bless my soul, yes!" gasped Mr. Jebb, puffing with exertion and surprise. "Where on earth did you get it? Eh? Thirty quid in that pocket-book if there's a cent."

"I got it from a man who stole it from you. He thought I was a plain-clothes policeman. Not bad, is it?"

"Well, I must say you look like one, mister. Aren't you?"

"No," said the man, slowly and a little sorrowfully. "I'm blind."

Confessions of a Humorist

By

JEROME K. JEROME

V.

EDITORIAL REMINISCENCES.

"*THE IDLER.*" "Edited by Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr. An illustrated monthly magazine. Price sixpence," was Barr's idea. But the title was mine. Barr had made the English edition of the *Detroit Free Press* quite a good property; and was keen to start something of his own. He wanted a popular name and, at first, was undecided between Kipling and myself. He chose me—as, speaking somewhat bitterly, he later on confessed to me—thinking I should be the easier to "manage." He had not liked the look of Kipling's jaw.

The Idler was a great success, so far as circulation was concerned. Our business manager was one Robert Dunkerley. I see from "Who's Who" that he himself explains that he "took to writing as an alleviation and alternative from business, and found it much more enjoyable." He is now John Oxenham. We had pleasant offices in Arundel Street, off the Strand, and gave tea-parties every Friday. They were known as "*The Idler* At Homes," and became a rendezvous for literary London. Burgin, G. B., was our sub-editor. He was a glutton for work, even then; and his appetite seems to have grown. He thinks nothing of turning out three novels a year. I once wrote two thousand words in a single day; and it took me the rest of the week to recover. Wells is even yet more wonderful. He writes a new book while most people are reading his last; throws off a history of the world while the average schoolboy is learning his dates; and invents a new religion in less time than it must have taken his god-parents to teach him his prayers. He has a table by his bedside; and if the spirit moves him will get up in the middle of the night, make himself a cup of coffee, write a chapter or so, and then go to sleep again. During intervals between his more serious work, he will contest a Parliamentary election or conduct a conference for educational reform. How Wells carries all his electricity, without wearing out the casing and causing a short circuit in his brain, is a scientific mystery. I mentioned once in a letter to him that I was a bit run down. He invited me to spend a day or two with him at Folkestone: get some sea-air in my lungs and a rest. To "rest" in the neighbourhood of Wells is like curling yourself up and trying to go to sleep in the centre of a cyclone. When he wasn't explaining the Universe, he was teaching me new games—

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complicated things that he had invented himself, and under stress of which my brain would reel. There are steepish hills on the South Downs. We went up them at four miles an hour, talking all the time. On the Sunday evening a hurricane was raging—with a driving sleet. Wells was sure a walk would do us good—wake us up. While Mrs. Wells was not watching we tucked the two little boys into their mackintoshes and took them with us.

"We'll all have a blow," said Wells.

They were plucky little beggars, both of them, and only laughed. But battling up the Leas against the wind, we found the sleet was cutting their small faces. So we made them walk one each behind us, with their arms around our waists, while we pressed forward with ducked heads. And even then Wells talked. But one day Nature got the better of him and silenced him. That was when he was staying with me at Goulds Grove, near Wallingford. We climbed a lonely spur of the Chilterns, and half-way up he gave out, and never spoke again till he had reached the top, and had sat there for at least five minutes, looking down upon the towers of Oxford and the Cotswold Hills beyond. SouthamptonWater gleamed like a speck of silver on the horizon, and at our feet we marked—now rutted and grass-grown—the long, straight line of the old Roman way that led from Grimm's Dyke past the camp on the Sinodun hills, and so onward to the north.

I can't remember for certain whether it was to Wells at Folkestone when I was staying with him, or to me at Wallingford when he was stopping with me, that there came one afternoon a company of Garden City experts on the hunt for a new site. The head of the party was an American gentleman who had devoted most of his life to the building of garden cities. He had been invited over to assist with his experience. He never got farther than the two words, "garden city." At that point Wells took the matter in hand, and for twenty minutes he explained to the old gentleman how garden cities should be constructed; the inherent imperfectibility of all garden cities that had hitherto been built; the proper method of financing and running garden cities. The old gentleman attempted a few feeble interruptions, but Wells would have none of them.

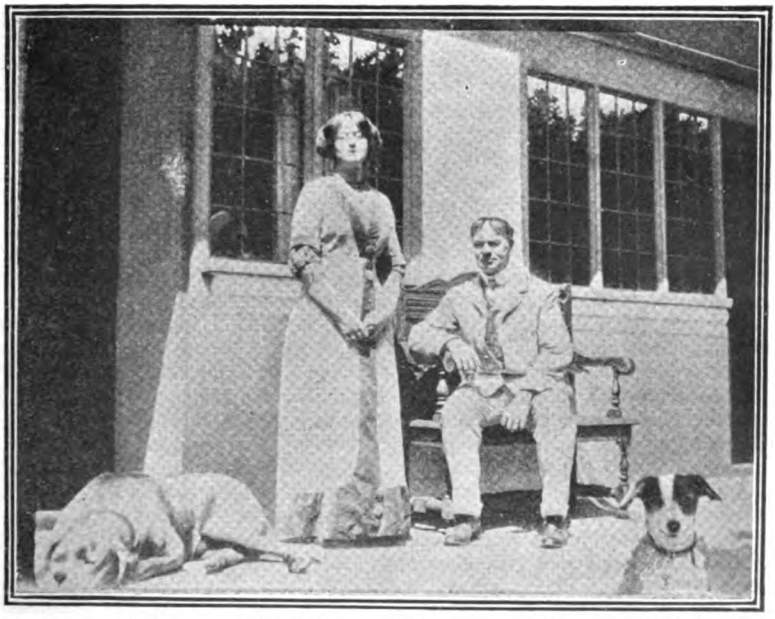
"Your ideas are all right," said the old gentleman, when Wells at last had finished, "but they are not practical."

"If the ideas are right," said Wells, "your business is to make them practical."

Of Shaw, it is said that he is never at rest unless he is working. Shaw once told me that he had only three speeches. One about politics (including religion); one about art (together with life in general); and the other one about himself. He said he found these three—with variations—served him for all purposes.

"People think I am making new speeches," he said. "I'm repeating things that I have told them over and over again, if only they had listened. I'm tired of talking," he said. "I wouldn't have to talk one-tenth as much if people only listened."

He used to say there were two schools of elocution: one the Lyceum Theatre (in Irving's time), and the other Hyde Park. He himself had graduated in Hyde Park—mounted on a chair without a back, opposite the Marble Arch. There is only one way of countering Shaw on a platform. It is hopeless trying to cross wits with him. The only



Mr. Jerome K. Jerome with his daughter Rowena—and friends—at Wallingford.

thing is to force him to become serious. Then I have known him to flounder. His mind works like lightning. I remember the then President of the Playgoers' Club coming to him one day. It was at the beginning of the cinema boom. He was an earnest young man.

"We want you to speak for us on Sunday evening, Mr. Shaw," he said, "on the question: Is there any danger of the actor being eliminated?"

"You don't say which actor," answered Shaw. "And, anyhow, why speak of it as a danger?"

Shaw is one of the kindest of men, but has no tenderness. His chief exercise, according to his own account, is public speaking; and his favourite recreation, thinking. He admitted to me once that there have been times when he has thought too much. He was motoring in Algiers, driving himself, with his chauffeur beside him, when out of his musings came to him the idea for a play.

"What do you think of this?" he said, turning to his chauffeur: and went on then and there to tell the man all about it.

He had usually found his chauffeur a keen and helpful critic. But on this occasion, instead of friendly encouragement, he threw himself upon Shaw and, wrenching the wheel out of his hands, sat down upon him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Shaw," the man said later on; "but it's such a damn good play that I didn't want you to die before you'd written it."

Shaw had never noticed the precipice.

CONAN DOYLE used to be another tremendous worker. He would sit at a small desk in a corner of his own drawing-room, writing a story, while a dozen people round about him were talking and laughing. He preferred it to being alone in his study. Sometimes, without looking up from his work, he would make a remark, showing he must have been listening to our conversation: but his pen had never ceased moving. Barrie had the same gift. He was a reporter on a provincial newspaper in his early days, and while waiting for orders amid the babel and confusion of the press room, he would curl himself up on a chair and, quite undisturbed, peg away at something dreamy and poetic.

A vigorous family, the Doyles, both mentally and physically. I remember a trip to Norway with Doyle and his sister Connie; a handsome girl, she might have posed as Brunhilda. She married Hornung the novelist. Another sister married a clergyman named Angel, a dear ugly fellow. They lived near to us at Wallingford, and next door to them happened to live another clergyman named Dam. And later on Dam was moved to Goring and found himself next door to a Roman Catholic priest whose name was Father Hell. Providence, I take it, arranges these little things for some wise purpose.

We had a rough crossing to Norway. Connie Doyle enjoyed it; she was that sort of girl; it added to her colour and gave a delightful curl to her hair. She had a sympathetic nature, and was awfully sorry for the poor women who were ill. She would burst in upon them every now and then to see if she could be of any help to them. You would have thought her mere presence would have cheered them up. As a matter of fact, it made them just mad.

"Oh, do go away, Connie," I heard one of her friends murmur, while passing the open door; "it makes me ill to look at you."

Doyle was always full of superfluous energy. He started to learn Norwegian on the boat. He got on so well that he became conceited; and one day, at a little rest-house up among the mountains, he lost his head. We had come there in stoljas—a tiny carriage only just big enough for one person, drawn by a pony about the size of a Newfoundland dog. But sturdy little creatures. They will trot their fifty miles in the day and be frisky in the evening. While we were lunching, with some twenty miles still in front of us, a young officer came into the room, and said something in Norwegian. Of course we turned him on to Doyle; and Doyle rose and bowed and answered him. We all watched the conversation. The young Norwegian officer was evidently charmed with Doyle; while Doyle stood ladling out Norwegian as though it had been his mother's tongue. After the officer was gone, we asked Doyle what it was all about.

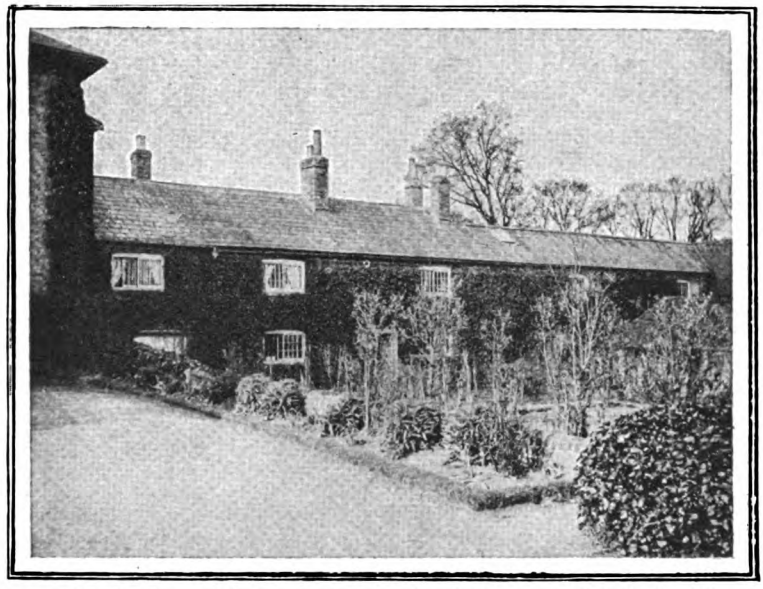
"Oh, just about the weather and the state of the roads and how some relation of his had hurt his leg," answered Doyle, carelessly. "Of course, I didn't understand all of it." He turned the conversation.

When we had finished lunch, and the stoljas were brought out, Doyle's pony was missing. It appeared Doyle had "lent" it to the young officer, whose own pony had gone lame. The ostler, who was also the waiter, had overheard the conversation. Doyle had said: "Certainly, with pleasure." He had said it once or twice. Also the Norwegian equivalent for: "Don't mention it."

There wasn't another pony within ten miles. One of our party, who had taken a fancy to the view, and thought he would

like to spend a day or two in the neighbourhood, let Doyle have his stolja. But for the rest of that trip, Doyle talked less Norwegian.

From shining examples of industry and steadfastness I—being a lazy man myself—find it a comfort to turn my thoughts away to W. W. Jacobs. He has told me himself that often he will spend (the word is his own) an entire morning constructing a single sentence. If he writes a four-thousand word story in a month he feels he has earned a holiday; and the reason that he does not always take it is that he is generally too tired. I once recommended him to try a secretary. I have found it so myself: the girl becomes a sort of conscience. After a time, you get ashamed of yourself, muddling about the room and trying to look as if you were thinking. She yawns, has pins and needles, begs your pardon every five minutes—was under the impression that you said something. A girl who knows her business can, without opening her mouth, bully a man into working.



"We had an old farm-house on the hills above Wallingford."

"It wasn't any good," he told me later on. "I put Nance on to it" (Nance was his sister-in-law). "I felt it wasn't going to be any use; and I didn't want the disgrace of it to get outside the family. I suppose I'm too far gone, or else she was too eager. She would persist in our beginning sharp at ten, and I'm never any good before twelve."

He told me that if it hadn't been for the Night Watchman, he might have had to give up writing. He had exhausted all his own stories. For weeks he cudgelled his brain in vain. Then suddenly in desperation he seized his pen and wrote:—

"'Speaking of wimmen,' said the Night Watchman."

And after that it was plain sailing. He left it to the Night Watchman. The Night Watchman talked on.

I like talking to Jacobs about politics. He is so gloriously honest.

"I'm not sure that I do want the greatest happiness of the greatest number," he said to me one afternoon. We were driving across the Berkshire downs, behind a jolly little Irish cob of mine; it was before the days of motors. "So far as I can see, there's not enough of the good things of this world to go round evenly, and I want more than my share."

As a matter of fact he doesn't. All he wants to make him happy is a pipe, two Scotch whiskies a day, and a game of bowls three afternoons a week. But he's an obstinate beggar. I asked him once why he was afraid of Socialism. I promised him—I offered to personally guarantee it—that under Socialism all his simple desires would be assured to him.

"I don't want things assured to me," he answered quite crossly. "I'd hate a lot of clever people fussing about, making me happy and doing me good. Damn their eyes."

Editorial experience taught me that the test of a manuscript lies in its first twenty lines. If the writer could say nothing in those first twenty lines to arrest my attention, it was not worth while continuing. I am speaking of the unknown author; but I would myself apply the argument all round. By adopting this method, I was able to give personal consideration to every manuscript sent in to me. The accompanying letter I took care, after a time, not to read. So often the real story was there. Everything had been tried; everything had failed: this was their last chance. The sole support of widowed

mother—of small crippled brother, could I not see my way? Struggling tradesmen on the verge of bankruptcy who had heard that Rudyard Kipling received a hundred pounds for a short story—would be willing to take less. Wives of little clerks, dreaming of new curtains. Would-be bridegrooms, wishful to add to their income: photograph of proposed bride enclosed, to be returned. Humbug, many of them: but trouble enough in the world to render it probable that the majority were genuine. Running through all of them, the conviction that literature is the last refuge of the deserving poor. The idea would seem to be general. Friends would drop in to talk to me about their sons: nice boys but, for some reason or another, hitherto unfortunate: nothing else left for them but to take to literature. Would I see them, and put them up to the ropes?

That it requires no training, I admit. A writer's first play, first book, can be as good as his last—or better. I like to remember that I discovered a goodish few new authors.

JACOBS I found one Saturday afternoon. I had stayed behind by myself on purpose to tackle a huge pile of manuscripts. I had waded through nearly half of them, finding nothing. I had grown disheartened, physically weary. The walls of the room seemed to be fading away. Suddenly I heard a laugh and, startled, I looked round. There was no one in the room but myself. I took up the manuscript lying before me, some dozen pages of fine close writing.

I read it through a second time, and wrote to "W. W. Jacobs, Esq.," to come and see me. Then I bundled the remaining manuscripts into a drawer; and went home, feeling I had done a good afternoon's work.

He came on Monday, a quiet, shy young man, with dreamy eyes and a soft voice. He looked a mere boy. Even now, in the dusk with the light behind him, he could pass very well for twenty-five—anyhow with his hat on. I remember the late Mrs. Humphry Ward whispering to me at a public dinner not so very long ago:—

"Who is the boy on my left?"

"The boy," I told her, was W. W. Jacobs.

"Good Lord," she said; "how does he do it?"

I made a contract with him for a series of short stories. He was diffident—afraid lest they might not all be up to sample. I had difficulty in persuading him. The story he had sent me had been round to a dozen magazines, and had been returned with the usual editorial regrets and compliments. I fancy the regrets came to be sincere.

We had an old farm-house on the hills above Wallingford. William the Conqueror had a friend at Wallingford, who opened the gates to him. It was there he first crossed the Thames. In return, William granted to the town a boon. Curfew still rings at Wallingford, but at nine o'clock instead of eight. We would hear it clearly when the wind was in the west: and always there would fall a silence. The house was on the site of an old monastery. The ancient yews still stand. There was a corner of the garden that we called the Nook. A thick yew hedge, the haunt of birds, surrounded it, and an old nut tree gave shelter from the sun. It made a pleasant working place. An interesting tablet might be placed above its green archway, commemorating the names of those who at one time or another had written there: among others, Wells, Jacobs, Doyle, Zangwill, Phillpotts.

Zangwill wrote stories of the Ghetto there; but wasted much of his time playing with the birds, digging up worms with the end of his pen to feed the young thrushes and blackbirds.

It was a lonely house, on a western slope of the Chilterns. There were two front doors. One had to remember which way the wind was blowing. If one opened the wrong one, there was danger of being knocked down; and then the wind would rush through all the rooms and play the devil before one got him out again. I had a liking for being there alone in wintertime, tending for myself and thinking. The owls also were fond of it. One could imagine all manner of sounds. Often I have gone out with a lantern, feeling sure I had heard the crying of a child. I remember reading there one night the manuscript of Wells's "Island of Doctor Moreau." It had come into the office just as I was leaving; and I had slipped it into my bag. I wished I had not begun it; but I could not put it down. The wind was howling like the seven furies; but above it I could hear the shrieking of the tortured beasts. I was glad when the dawn came.

W. J. Locke came to live at Wallingford. He had a bungalow down by the river, and lived there by himself until he married. He used to work at night. We could see his light shining across the river. His future wife lodged with an old servant of ours. He would tell my girls stories of the Munchausen family, descendants of the famous Baron. He used to stay with them in France. The family failing, judging from Locke's stories, still clung to them. An heirloom they particularly prized was the sling used by the late King David in his

contest with Goliath. Locke had seen it himself: a simple enough thing, apparently home-made. We took him to Henley Regatta one year. We had the saddler's house down by the bridge. It was an awful week. We got drenched every day. I lent him some clothes. He is longer than I am. His arms were too long, and his legs were too long. Some Oxford boys with us dubbed him Dick Swiveller. He did suggest poor Dick.

The young Norwegian officer was evidently charmed with Doyle, who stood ladling out Norwegian as though it had been his mother's tongue.

Henham, or John Trevena as he called himself, was a neighbour of ours at Wallingford. He wrote some good books. "Furze the Cruel" and "Granite" are among the best. The woman to whom he was engaged died. But he always spoke of her as if she were living—would talk with her in his study and go long walks with her. He built himself a solitary house high up on Dartmoor. Lived there by himself for a time. And then quite suddenly he married.

I suppose luck goes to the making of reputations, as it does to the shaping of most things human. Next to Hardy, I place Eden Phillpotts as the greatest of living English novelists; and Hardy has not his humour. But I take it he will have to wait till he is dead before full justice is done to him. He was staying with us; and one afternoon we went a picnic. Landing at Dorchester lock, we climbed the Sinodun hills, where once was a Roman encampment, commanding the river. The ramparts still remain and one may trace the ordered streets. And before that, in Druid times, it had been a British fortress. A grove of trees marks the place now. "A green crown upon a lovely hill." It is a famous landmark for many miles around. We talked, as we boiled our kettle, of the danger of fire. There had been no rain for weeks and all the countryside was parched. The fear haunted us. The idea once started, we seemed unable to get away from it. There were dead trunks among the living that would have served as touchwood to ignite the whole.

After tea, we were preparing to light our pipes. Phillpotts was standing with his match-box in his hand. I was waiting to ask him for a light. It is most men's one economy, lucifer matches. Instead, he replaced the box in his pocket and, turning h s back on me, walked down the hill. I called to him, but he took no notice. Later, I found him seated on the lock gates, smoking.

"Do you know what was happening to me just now?" he said. "A beastly little imp was urging me for all he was worth to set fire to that rotten tree against which we were standing. One lighted match would have done it, and burnt down the entire grove. If I hadn't come away, I believe he'd have nagged me into doing it."

Love of Nature is to Phillpotts almost a religion. I wonder if there is a devil?

A Scotchman who signed himself Cynicus drew cartoons for *The Idler:* clever sketches, with a biting satire. He had a quaint studio in Drury Lane; and lived there with his sisters. One used to meet Ramsay MacDonald there. He was a pleasant, handsome young man—so many of us were,

five-and-thirty years ago. He was fond of lecturing. Get him on to the subject of Carlyle and he would talk for half an hour. He would stand with his hat in one hand and the door handle in the other, and by this means always secured the last word.

The Idler was not enough for me. I had the plan in my mind of a new weekly paper that should be a combination of magazine and journal. I put my own money into it, and got together the rest. Dudley Hardy designed us a poster. It was the first time a known artist had condescended to do poster-work. It came to be known as the "Yellow Girl." She seemed to be stepping out of the hoarding. If high up, you feared she would land on your head; and if low down, you feared for your toes. *To-Day*, I suppose, is now forgotten; but though I say it who shouldn't, it was a wonderful twopennyworth. Stevenson's "Ebb-Tide" was our first serial. Myself, I never read the serial in a magazine. A month is too long: one loses touch. But a week is just right; one remembers, and looks forward. Stevenson agreed with me. He came to see me two or three times. He was ill, and was looking forward to getting out of England. It was always a difficulty to start him talking; but once started he would go on without a break: reminding me, in this respect, of Barrie. Maybe it is a Scotch trait. A gentle, unassuming man, he seemed to have no notion that he was anybody of importance—or if he had, he kept it hidden.

ANTHONY HOPE wrote for both *The Idler* and *To-Day*. I am sorry he came into money. He might have been writing more to-day if he hadn't. Poverty is the only reliable patron of literature. He was a methodical worker. He had his "office" in a street opposite the Savoy Chapel. He would reach there as the clock struck ten, work till four, then, locking the door, go home to his flat in Bloomsbury. I met him for the first time at the house of a young couple named Baldry, who have since grown older, and become dear friends of mine. He was an artist and still is; but is best known as a critic. She was a slip of a girl then, and even more beautiful than she is now. She had been chief dancer at the Gaiety—Lily Lyndhurst on the programme. She confided to me, in the course of the evening, that she was the original "Dolly" of the famous "Dolly Dialogues." Anthony Hope had—well, not exactly told her so, but given her to understand it. He had a way with him. Since then I have met quite a number of charming women who have confided to me precisely the same secret.

To-Day was an illustrated paper. Dudley Hardy, Sauber, Fred Pegram, Lewis Baumer, Hal Hurst, Aubrey Beardsley, Raven Hill, Sime, Phil May, all drew for it. As I have said, it was a wonderful twopennyworth. It was difficult to get work out of Phil May in his later years. He would promise you—would swear by all the gods he knew; and then forget all about it. I had a useful office boy. He had a gift for sitting still and doing nothing. He could sit for hours. It never seemed to bore him. James was one of his names.

"James," I would say, "you go round to Mr. Phil May's studio, tell him you've come for the drawing that he promised Mr. Jerome last Friday week; and wait till you get it."

If Phil May wasn't in, he would wait till Phil May did come in. If Phil May was engaged, he would wait till Phil May was disengaged. The only way of getting him out of the studio was to give him a drawing. Generally Phil May gave him anything that happened to be handy. It might be the drawing he had intended for me. More often, it would be a sketch belonging, properly speaking, to some other editor. Then there was trouble with the other editor. But Phil May was used to trouble. He was a thirsty soul. His wife used to tell the story that one night he woke her up, breaking crockery. It seemed he was looking for water. The water bottle was empty.

"Oh, well, drink out of the jug," suggested Mrs. May, "there's plenty of water in that. I filled it myself, the last thing."

"I've finished that," said May.

He had been in the office of an art dealer in Liverpool, before he came to London. They hadn't got on together. There had been faults on both sides, one gathered. The old man also came to London and established himself in Bond Street. From him I obtained an insight into the ways of picture dealers. He looked me up one day at my office.

"Could you put your hand on a journalist," he asked me, "who knows anything about art?"

"Sounds easy," I answered. "Most of them know everything. What is it you want?"

"He needn't know much," he went on, "I want him to write me an article about Raeburn. I'll tell him just what I want him to say. All he's got to do is to make it readable, with plenty of headlines. Then I want you to make a special feature of it in *To-Day*."

"Wait a bit," I said. "From all I've heard, this man Raeburn is dead. Where does the excitement come in, from my point of view?"

"I'm not asking you to do it for nothing," he explained. "Send your

advertisement man to me and he and I will fix it up."

I began to understand.

"You've been buying Raeburns," I suggested.

"Raeburn is going to be the big thing this season," he answered. "We're just waiting for the Americans to come over."

Barry Pain was of great help to me upon *To-Day*. He wrote for me "Eliza's Husband," which I think the best thing he has done. "Eliza" is a delightful creation. Another series he wrote for *To-Day* we called "De Omnibus." They were the musings upon things in general of a London omnibus conductor, with occasional intrusions from the driver. One is glad of the disappearance of the old horse bus, for the sake of the horses; but the rubicund-faced driver one misses with regret. His caustic humour, shouted downward from his perch, was a feature of the London streets. I remember once our driver making as usual to pull up by the kerb at the top of Sloane Street, opposite Harvey and Nichol's. A gorgeous "equipage"—as the newspaper reporter would describe it—drawn by a pair of high-stepping bays, and driven by a magnificent creature in livery of blue and gold, dashed in between and ousted us. Our driver bent forward and addressed him in a loud but friendly tone.

"Good morning, gardener," he said. "Coachman ill again?"

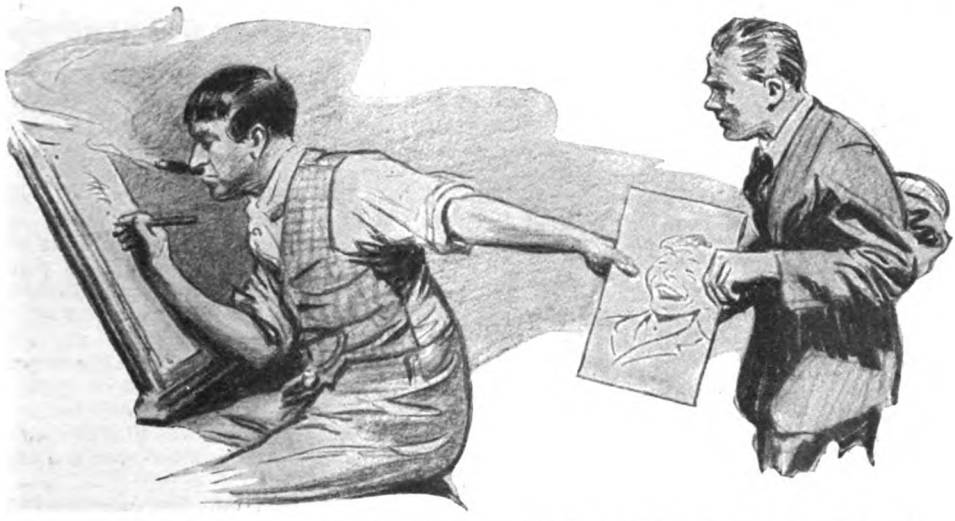
The conductor also was a kindly soul—would recognize one as a fellow human being. One would hardly dream of trying to be familiar with the modern motor-bus conductor.

It was to Barry Pain that the reproach "new humorist" was first applied. It began with a sketch of his in the *Granta*—a simple little thing entitled "The Love Story of a Sardine."

Le Gallienne was another of my "young men," as the term goes. "The Chief" they used to call me. "Is the Chief in?" they would ask of the young lady in the outer office. Just a convention, but always it gave me a little thrill of pride when I overheard it. Le Gallienne was a great beauty in those days. He had the courage of his own ideas in the matter of dress. I remember at a *matinée* a lady in the stall next to me looking up at him. He was sitting in the front row of the dress circle.

"Who's that beautiful woman?" she asked.

It has come to be the accepted idea that woman is more beautiful than man. It is a masculine delusion, born of sex instinct. I give woman credit for not believing it. The human species is no exception to the general law. The male is Nature's favourite. I remember at Munich a young officer going to a ball in his sister's clothes. He made a really lovely woman, but over-played the joke. It led to a duel the next morning in the Englisher Garten between two of his brother officers, and one of them was killed.



Generally Phil May gave the boy anything that happened to be handy. It might be the drawing he had intended for me. More often it would be a sketch belonging to some other editor.

THERE is nothing of the celebrity about Thomas Hardy, O.M. He himself tells the story that a very young lady friend of his thought that O.M. stood for Old Man; and was very angry with King Edward. The order was created to give Watts, the painter, a distinction that he could not very well refuse. He had declined everything else. The last time I saw Thomas Hardy was at a private view of the Royal Academy. He was talking to the Baldrys. The papers the next morning gave the usual list of celebrities who had been present: all the famous chorus ladies, all the film stars, all the American millionaires. Nobody had noticed Thomas Hardy.

He lives behind a high wall in an unpretentious house that he built for himself long ago on the downs just outside Dorchester. We called upon him there just before the war. His wife was away and it happened to be the servant's afternoon out. His secretary opened the door to us. His wife died a little later and she is now the second Mrs. Hardy. It was a warm afternoon and we walked in the garden. At first he appears to be a gentleman of no importance; but, after a while, behind his quietness and simplicity, you catch glimpses of the real man. He shows himself in his poetry to be one of the deepest thinkers of any age. The unassuming little gentleman looking at you with pale, gentle eyes does not suggest it. There was a whispering towards tea-time between Hardy and the lady. Hardy was worried. It seemed that Mrs. Hardy, careful soul, not anticipating visitors, had before leaving locked up all the spare tea-things. We had some fun searching round. My wife and daughter were with me, making five of us. We got together a scratch lot, and sat down to table.

To-Day was killed by a libel action brought against me by a company promoter, a Mr. Samson Fox, whose activities my City editor had somewhat severely criticized. I have the satisfaction of boasting that it was the longest case, and one of the most expensive, ever heard in the Court of Queen's Bench. It resolved itself into an argument as to whether domestic gas could be made out of water. At the end of thirty days, the unanimous conclusion arrived at was that it remained to be seen; and the Judge, in a kindly speech, concluded that the best way of ending the trouble would be for us each to pay our own costs. Mine came to nine thousand pounds; and Mr. Samson Fox's to eleven. We shook hands in the corridor. He informed me that he was going back to Leeds to strangle his solicitors; and hoped I would do the same by mine. But it seemed to me too late.

A big catastrophe has, at first, a numbing effect. Realization comes later. It was summer time, and my family were in the country. I dined by myself at a restaurant in Soho, and afterwards went to the theatre: but I recall a dull, aching sensation in the neighbourhood of my stomach, and an obstinate dryness of the throat.

Of course it meant my selling out, both from *The Idler* and *To-Day*. Barr's friends took over *The Idler*, and Bottomley bought most of my holding in *To-Day*. But it had, from the beginning, been a one-man paper, and after I went out it gradually died.

I had always dreamed of being an editor. My mother gave me a desk on my sixth birthday, and I started a newspaper in partnership with a little old maiden aunt of mine. She wore three corkscrew curls on each side of her head, which she used to take off before bending down over the table to write.

My mother liked our first number. "I am sure he was meant to be a preacher," she said to my father.

"It comes to the same thing," said my father. "The newspaper is going to be the new pulpit."

I still think it might be.

THE END.

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS, AND MADELON.—No. 6.

Blood Money

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

THERE was something wrong with Mr. Billingham. For two days he had shown a marked lack of interest in his food, his drink, and his gambling. The spring had laid its relaxing hand upon the hills and the little Principality. Men were wearing flannels and straw hats, and some of the women had even ventured upon muslins. Mr. Billingham, however, seemed slow in responding to these genial signs of the advancing season. For several days he had shown a tendency almost to mope. The climax came when, at half an hour before his usual luncheon-time, he complained of his cocktail at Ciro's.

"*Mais comment, monsieur?*" the bar-tender exclaimed. "It is as I have always mixed it day by day for months."

"It tasted flat," Mr. Billingham pronounced. "Flat!"

There was nothing more to be said. The bar-tender withdrew with a pained expression. The Marquis stared first at his friend's frosted glass, then at Mr. Billingham himself.

"My friend," he declared, "it is perhaps the liver. The cocktail is as always. The moment you enter the place Charles braces himself. You have even those much-to-be-treasured drops of absinthe at your disposal."

"It didn't taste good," Mr. Billingham insisted doggedly.

"We will try another," the Marquis suggested. "Charles! In case there should have been any slight discrepancy in the mixing, in case your elbow should have shaken with the angostura, your special attention, if you please."

Charles had scarcely recovered from his hurt, but he obeyed orders. He shook the cocktails himself in front of the two men and poured them out, waiting for the verdict. Mr. Billingham felt that he had perhaps been a little unreasonable.

"I guess the cocktail was all right, Charles," he admitted. "It's myself that's out of sorts."

Charles accepted the *amende* and withdrew. Mr. Billingham leaned forward and gripped his companion by the arm. His eyes were fixed upon two approaching figures.

"Say, Marquis," he demanded, "who the devil's the young man with Madelon?"

The Marquis adjusted his eyeglass and stared at the new-comers. Madelon was wearing a ravishing little gown of lemon-coloured linen, with an adorable little hat. Her companion was a tall, thin young Englishman in grey tweeds, who walked very slowly with the help of a stick.

"That is Captain Bruntingford," the Marquis answered. "Madelon introduced him last night."

"Know anything about him?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

"Nothing whatever," was the candid reply.

"Mademoiselle Madelon does, apparently, to judge from the way she's been going about with him the last few days," Mr. Billingham grunted.

The Marquis suddenly understood the cause of his friend's low spirits. Internally

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he amused himself; externally he remained placid.

"Madelon has, perhaps, an eye to business," her uncle remarked under his breath. "She is scarcely likely to find any other interest in the young man. Be careful! They arrive!"

Madelon entered the little glass-enclosed

"I am lunching with Captain Bruntingford," she answered. "He would be quite polite if we turned it into a *partie carrée*, but he would be very cross with me afterwards. Englishmen need so much humouring."

"Americans can get the needle sometimes," Mr. Billingham reminded her.

room with the sunshine streaming upon her hair, her eyes laughing, her step light and buoyant. She kissed her hand to Mr. Billingham, installed her companion in a chair, and placed his stick by his side.

"Mr. Billingham," she said, "let me introduce you in the best American fashion. Shake hands, if you please, with Captain Bruntingford, late of the British Army. Uncle, you have met Captain Bruntingford. Mr. Billingham, will you order us some of those cocktails with a little froth at the top—or——" she added, turning to the young man.

"I'd like a dry Martini, if I may," he begged.

Mr. Billingham gave the necessary orders. The little party joined forces. Mr. Billingham was prompt in extending an invitation to luncheon, but Madelon shook her head.

"Not wise Americans," she replied, "not really good and kind Americans, who like their friends to be happy and who trust them. Besides, Captain Bruntingford and I have serious matters to discuss."

The cocktails were drunk and approved. Madelon helped her companion out of his chair, gave him his stick, and they departed. Mr. Billingham stared after them gloomily.

"Who the devil is this fellow Bruntingford?" he asked again.

"I expect Madelon will tell you presently," her uncle replied cautiously. "I know nothing about him myself. At the same time——"

"Well?"

"I do not fancy that Madelon is only amusing herself. She has what you call the eye to business, as we, too, upon occasion."

Mr. Billingham found the suggestion consoling. He was able, even, to find some slight interest in his luncheon. Afterwards Madelon unexpectedly joined them. They had the corner table on the terrace and she accepted a chair and some coffee.

"Tell us, my dear," the Marquis invited, "more of your friend, Captain Bruntingford."

"Say, Marquis," Mr. Billingham demanded, "who the devil's the **young man with Madelon?**"

"I like the type," she said, "and he orders the right sort of things to eat. He has just the right tone, too, with headwaiters. In short, I find him quite an agreeable companion."

"Is this sufficient," the Marquis ventured, "to account for the enthusiasm with which you have accepted his recent invitations?"

"Perhaps not altogether," she conceded. "You see, he was wounded in nineteen-fourteen, and afterwards he was attached to the Intelligence Department of the British Army. His section seems to have been broken up since the war, and he has gone into partnership with a firm of private detectives."

The Marquis tapped a cigarette upon the table-cloth.

"Indeed!" he murmured.

"That sounds kind of interesting," Mr. Billingham observed.

"He is out here," she continued, "on some sort of business for his firm. That is exactly as much as he has confided in me. I am beginning to believe," she went on, with a sigh, "that it is as much as he means to tell me. And I am just a little curious.

"Every afternoon he drives himself in a little two-seater car towards La Turbie; always in the same direction, always about the same hour. Another thing about that expedition rather interests me, too. Always before he starts he feels in his pocket to be sure that his revolver is there."

"But how observant!" the Marquis murmured.

Madelon shrugged her shoulders.

"The sort of grey tweed lounge suit which he wears," she said, "is not made for carrying things in the pocket of which you desire to conceal the shape. Then there is one other somewhat singular circumstance. Although he is liberal with his invitations to me for luncheons, dinners, and suppers, he has never once asked me to accompany him in that afternoon drive."

The Marquis smiled faintly.

"A little piqued!" he commented.

"Possibly," Madelon assented. "In any case, it has occurred to me that it was my turn to bring something into the bag."

Mr. Billingham smoked serenely. He was feeling a little more content with life.

"There may not be room for us to butt in," he remarked. "He may be just collecting evidence in some divorce case. These detective agencies don't as a rule handle the big jobs."

"Nevertheless, I am intrigued," Madelon persisted. "There is much about Captain Bruntingford that interests me. Sometimes in the middle of a dinner or a luncheon I have seen a shadow pass over his face, and a light in his eyes as though there were something near which he feared. I have seen him start when someone has nearly run into us at a corner. I am sure that he is a brave man, yet I am sure that he has been living in fear."

"The remains of shell-shock, perhaps," Mr. Billingham speculated. "Has he taken that little red car out this afternoon?"

Madelon nodded.

"He has taken it out and gone just the same way—upon the route the cars take for La Turbie."

"It's a fine day," Mr. Billingham said. "I'll hire a car and treat you to a spin. We'll go up to the Golf Club to tea."

Madelon hesitated, but it was obvious that the idea attracted her.

"I should love to come," she admitted. "Only, if we do happen to meet Captain Bruntingford in his red car, I hope he will not think that we are following him."

"It's an open road," Mr. Billingham reminded her, "and there are plenty of others upon it. We'll get a move on right away and see the sunset from the top."

THE little party started within a quarter of an hour. They never reached La Turbie. About half-way up the narrow road which leads into the upper Corniche, just after negotiating a very awkward bend, they came upon an all-too-common sight in this region of mountainous roads and reckless driving. A little crowd of people were gathered on the edge of the precipitous slope. The remains of a small car lay upside-down, partially concealed by a huge volume of smoke and steam and with little flames bursting from the petrol tank. A few yards away something was stretched upon the ground, covered by a mackintosh sheet. Mr. Billingham touched the driver upon the arm, and by his directions the car was brought to an abrupt standstill.

"I shouldn't come on, Miss Madelon," he advised. "Let the chauffeur back with you to the corner. The Marquis and I will see if there is anything to be done."

Madelon was looking straight ahead of her. The colour had left her cheeks, but her voice was quite steady.

"The little red car!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"I thought it might be," he assented. "I'm afraid by the way they've covered the body up there isn't much left of poor Captain Bruntingford."

Madelon half-closed her eyes.

"I think perhaps you are right," she murmured. "Please come back to me soon."

The car was reversed slowly to the corner and left in a safe place. From below a large police motor-van came tearing up the hill, and from above a doctor's car from La Turbie was winding its way to the scene of the disaster. Mr. Billingham and the Marquis joined the little crowd of people. No one seemed to know much of what had happened. The car had struck the low grey stone wall at the side of the road and turned over. The driver was apparently quite dead; his neck must have been broken.

"Better let me see," Mr. Billingham suggested. "I'm not a medical man, but I did a little amateur surgery in the war."

They made way for him and he lifted the waterproof cover. When, a few moments later, he rose from his knees, most of his healthy colour had departed. The doctor from above and a police *commissaire* from below arrived almost together. Mr. Billingham took the Marquis by the arm and led him a little way down the hill. They could see the marks of the car, could see where it had apparently skidded and struck the wall. About twenty or thirty paces farther on was a small villa, enclosed by a high wall of white plaster. Mr. Billingham looked at it speculatively. Then he looked back at the little group, at the police *commissaire* and the doctor, both bending over the prostrate form. An ambulance which had followed the police car was now drawn up.

"Guess there's nothing else we can do," Mr. Billingham said. "We'll get back to Miss Madelon."

They returned, Mr. Billingham thoughtful

Mr. Billingham looked at the doctor bending over the prostrate form. "Guess there's nothing else we can do," he said. "We'll get back to Miss Madelon."

and curiously silent. The Marquis answered the inquiry in his niece's eyes with a grave little nod.

"A very serious affair, I am afraid, my dear," he told her kindly. "The car seems to have struck the wall, skidded, and overturned. Poor fellow! He is quite dead."

"How terrible!" Madelon murmured. "And how strange!" she added, a moment later. "I saw him drive once or twice and I thought he was especially skilful. The roads are not slippery. Why should he skid?"

Mr. Billingham came back from his brown study.

"I should say," he remarked, "that it was not exactly a skid. He lost control of the machine."

"But why?" Madelon demanded.

Mr. Billingham pointed to the little pink villa behind the high plastered wall.

"Because the poor fellow was shot—probably from that villa—on his way up the hill," he announced, solemnly. "Naturally he lost control of the car, and over it went. As a matter of fact, his neck was broken as well."

"You mean that he was murdered?" Madelon gasped.

"Not the slightest doubt about it," Mr. Billingham replied. "He was shot well on

the left-hand side, and there seems to be no cover anywhere near except from that villa I heard one of the labourers say that they heard the report of a tyre-burst. As a matter of fact, it must have been the report of the rifle."

"Did you tell the *commissaire?*" Madelon asked, as they started off on their homeward journey.

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"He didn't need any telling," he replied. "Neither he nor the doctor can make any mistake about that. What I am curious about," he went on, "is just this. There's a heap of talk about the way accidents and sudden deaths and motor catastrophes are hushed up in this part of the world. Now we shall be able to judge for ourselves."

A FEW days later the very amiable functionary who presided over the lives and liberties of the Monégasques received a call from Mr. Billingham. He welcomed him with cordiality.

"Official or unofficial?" was his first question.

Mr. Billingham considered the matter.

"Because," the other continued, "officially I can be dumb; unofficially I am able to remember that we are good friends, that you have done us services, that you are not one of those people who go about making trouble unnecessarily."

"My visit is unofficial," Mr. Billingham announced. "I came to ask whether you have formed any conclusions as to how that poor fellow came by his death—the fellow in the little red motor-car."

The police functionary shrugged his shoulders.

"Our roads are dangerous to those not accustomed to them," he declared.

"No one," Mr. Billingham retorted, "can drive a car successfully with a bullet wound in his heart."

The functionary stroked his chin.

"You noticed that, too?" he observed.

"I did," Mr. Billingham replied. "I also noticed that the only very brief report of the accident described it as being due to a skid, and Captain Bruntingford's death due to a broken neck."

"His neck certainly was broken," the other remarked—"a sufficient cause of death, I think."

"Have you no curiosity," Mr. Billingham inquired, "as to the bullet wound?"

The other shook his head.

"We are never curious here about these things," he observed. "Besides, what good purpose is served by destroying what is, after all, an amiable fiction? It is better for the world to believe that this young man died of a broken neck through a motor accident than that he shot himself."

"Shot himself?" Mr. Billingham murmured. "Ah! By the by, was the weapon found?"

"Not to my knowledge," the police functionary admitted. "To tell you the truth, I sent two men up to search, but they were unsuccessful. There were a good many men at work in the fields and on the roads, and I am afraid that anything in the way of firearms is looked upon as a rather desirable acquisition amongst these people."

"I follow you," Mr. Billingham murmured. "You know that I am not a chatterbox. For the moment, nothing more! Oblige me with one piece of information."

"By all means."

"I should like the *dossiers* of the inmates of the little villa—'Les Mimosas,' it is called—quite close to where the young man met with his accident."

The police functionary looked across at his visitor keenly.

"Why?" he demanded.

Mr. Billingham shrugged his shoulders.

"An idea," he replied.

"They shall be at your hotel within two hours," the other promised. "In the meantime——"

"We are of one mind," Mr. Billingham declared. "The young man must have friends, probably relations. Let it remain at a broken neck. But be sure I have my *dossiers*. There is one thing more, too. If any of Captain Bruntingford's business friends should come over from England, will you ask them to favour me with a call?"

"With pleasure," was the ready response.

IT was one of the pleasing functions of Mr. Billingham's cleanly life to perform certain acrobatic exercises in his bathroom every day. He was lying upon his back, pummelling his stomach with both fists and indulging at the same time in deep breathing, when a knock at the door, the next morning, disturbed his praiseworthy efforts at maintaining his physical condition.

"What is it?" he demanded, sitting up.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," was the floor-waiter's reply.

Mr. Billingham reflected for a moment.

"Show the gentleman into the *salon*," he directed, "and leave his card on my tea-tray."

The footsteps outside passed along. Mr. Billingham abandoned further attempts to reduce his girth and jumped into his bath. Five minutes later, with tousled hair and

glowing face, he picked up the card which reposed upon his tray.

"*MR. JAMES H. BERRY.*"

And underneath in small type :—

"*Berry and Bruntingford,*
Private Inquiry Agency."

Mr. Billingham poured himself out a cup of tea and, with it in his hand, passed through to his *salon*. A little man, with sandy hair and an indifferent complexion, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles and obviously of furtive habits, rose to his feet as he entered.

"Mr. Billingham, sir," he said, "I fear that I have disturbed you too early."

"Don't you worry," was the cheerful reply. "We get up a trifle late here. Monte Carlo isn't New York, or London either for that matter. Glad to see you, sir."

He shook hands and waved his visitor to a chair.

"You are Captain Bruntingford's partner, I gather," he went on. "Terrible affair! What was the game out here, eh ?"

Mr. Berry felt his breath being taken away. He removed his spectacles and polished them.

"I am very much disturbed, Mr. Billingham," he confided. "The news of this accident to Captain Bruntingford was a great shock."

"Accident ?" Mr. Billingham repeated.

His visitor nodded gravely.

"He was, I understand, killed in a motor accident."

"I guess not," Mr. Billingham objected. "He was murdered."

The little man jumped almost out of his chair. Then he leaned forward and looked at Mr. Billingham, his hands gripping its sides.

"You don't mean that ?" he gasped.

"I surely do," Mr. Billingham replied. "He was shot through the heart. That's how the motor accident happened."

There was no doubt about it that Mr. Berry was not only taken by surprise but that he was deeply moved. He dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief.

"I told Bruntingford," he declared, "that it wasn't our class of business. Too risky and not enough to it! He wouldn't listen to reason. Murdered! Good God! They didn't tell me this at the police-station."

"They wouldn't," was the curt rejoinder. "Murders and suicides never happen in Monte Carlo—just accidents, that's all!"

"Well, well, well!" Mr. Berry exclaimed, helplessly. "To think they'd go as far as that!"

"Who's 'they'?" Mr. Billingham demanded.

His visitor shivered.

"How much do you know ?" he asked.

"Nothing," Mr. Billingham confessed.

"Where do you come in, then ?" the other inquired, a little puzzled.

"I don't come in," Mr. Billingham admitted. "I want to. I should like to take on Bruntingford's job—whatever it was. That is, unless you're going to take it on yourself."

Mr. Berry dabbed his forehead again.

"Take it on myself!" he repeated. "I'd sooner starve first. It ain't my idea of pleasant business, sir, and that's a fact."

"No ?" Mr. Billingham murmured, sympathetically.

"Give me the makings of a divorce case, or the chance of collecting evidence in a slander job, or even a bit of blackmail, and I'm on the spot," Mr. Berry continued. "When it comes to these big things with desperate people up against one—well, all I say is, 'Take the job somewhere else.' It's what I told Bruntingford, only he wasn't having any. He'd got used to these tough affairs in the Army."

"Put me wise about this," Mr. Billingham begged. "I'm interested."

Mr. Berry cleared his throat. Somehow or other this powerful pink-and-white-looking man, in his bath robe, still glowing from his exercises, inspired him with confidence. He accepted a cigarette, and Mr. Billingham, after a moment's departure from the room, returned with another cup of tea, helped himself to a cigar, and, crossing his legs, settled down in an easy-chair, with a liberal display of underclothes.

"Bruntingford was after ten thousand pounds," Mr. Berry explained. "I never believed he'd get it, and he didn't. He got something else instead, and it's my belief that the next person who goes after that ten thousand will get his the same way."

"What is it ?" Mr. Billingham inquired. "Stolen money ?"

"Blood money!" was the hushed reply.

"You've got me guessing," Mr. Billingham confessed.

"Eh ?"

"What kind of blood money ?"

Mr. Berry hitched his chair a little closer.

"The Johnny who first came to see Bruntingford," he confided, "was one of them foreign Jews, and he was marked down for trouble right enough. Never came except after dusk, and he was scared stiff if ever there was a footstep on the stairs. Got a cough, he had, too, enough to split him open. I didn't understand a word of their lingo. Bruntingford had to tell me afterwards. It seems the little chap was a Russian—had been in the police, and got into trouble. He bolted from Russia and brought some of the papers

from headquarters with him. It was through these he got on to the game. The Russian Government, if there is such a thing, want that chap Kitilsky, who ran things there for a bit after they wiped the Czar out. He escaped when the Bolshevists took hold, but he's alive still and they want him."

"Why?" Mr. Billingham demanded.

"Got some papers, for one thing," Mr. Berry explained, "and they believe he knows where there's some stolen gold hidden. Anyhow, they want him bad. Ten thousand pounds reward they offered. The little chap, just before he hopped it, got on to the lay. He reckoned Kitilsky was living at a villa somewhere back of Monte Carlo. He daren't leave London himself, though, and daren't claim the reward. He wanted Bruntingford to take hold and see what arrangement he could make. He found most of the money and Bruntingford came out here. Looks as though he had discovered his man, if your story's the truth."

"I guess that's so."

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Billingham proffered a cigar, which was promptly accepted.

"You going on with this show?" the latter inquired.

Mr. Berry hesitated. There was a cunning gleam in his eyes.

"I'm none too keen," he confessed. "I'd rather sell my share."

"Your share?"

"The reward."

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"You mean you'd like to get home with a sound skin."

"I was never one of the fighting sort," Mr. Berry admitted, apologetically.

"I tell you what I'll do," Mr. Billingham suggested. "I'll look into this matter. I can't say I've got properly the hang of it yet, but I'd kinder like to say a word or two to someone in that villa."

"You're tackling it yourself?" Mr. Berry asked, with a shiver.

"I guess so," Mr. Billingham admitted. "I don't know as I see clearly as to the financial side of it yet, but I'll give you a third of anything I pick up."

"It's a go!" was the eager reply. "I'll stay here for a few days on the chance."

Mr. Berry brought his visit to a close. He looked around the room wonderingly.

"What are you taking this on for?" he demanded. "You seem to have plenty of the stuff already—living here like a prince."

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive," he confided, as he showed his guest out. "Besides, there is always the adventure!"

MR. BILLINGHAM, later in the morning, drove up to the Villa des Mimosas in a closed car which he had hired in the Casino Square. He passed the crumpled-up remains of the little red automobile, lying upon the other side of the broken wall, and descended in a few moments before a huge nail-studded door let into the plastered wall. He pushed down the iron handle with a jerk, but found, as he had expected, that it was fastened on the other side. Rather to his surprise, however, after scarcely a moment's delay, a little click was heard and the door was released by means of a catch from within. He stepped into a narrow stretch of garden, uncared for and overgrown with weeds. The front door of the villa had been opened, and upon the threshold a woman was standing. Mr. Billingham recognized her at once as an *habituée* of the Casino—a florid-looking woman with too much flesh, too much jewellery, ill-powdered and besmeared with rouge. She was untidily dressed. Her hair was tousled. There was a hole in her black felt slippers. After the somewhat tense sensations of his impending arrival, Mr. Billingham was conscious of a curious sense of something inadequate in the situation. His surprise was increased when the woman addressed him in English.

"Are you the English doctor?" she inquired.

"American," Mr. Billingham replied, with ready presence of mind.

"The same thing," she muttered. "Come in."

She closed the door carefully behind him. Mr. Billingham caught a glimpse of an unkempt-looking man securing the outside gate. The hall of the villa was dirty, ill-kept, and almost devoid of furniture.

The woman paused there. She spoke in a hoarse, husky whisper.

"I don't know that you can do anything," she said. "It's about all up. He wouldn't have a doctor before, though. The only chance is you might be able to keep him going for a week or two."

"Let me see him," Mr. Billingham enjoined.

She opened one of the doors which led out of the hall. Mr. Billingham found himself in what might have once been the *salon* of the villa, but was now a nondescript apartment, containing only a few oddments of furniture, heavy with cigarette smoke, malodorous from the closed windows and reminiscences of past meals. Although it was a brilliantly sunny morning, a pair of shabby curtains were completely drawn—the light in the room was so dim, indeed, that Mr. Billingham nearly blinked. There was heat coming somewhere from a closed stove, and stretched upon a sofa by its side was the

The woman threw in the ball and turned the wheel. The man leaned over, watching it eagerly.

emaciated figure of a man wrapped in a dressing-gown. His throat was so skinny that its cords seemed to stand out almost singly. His deep, sunken eyes were unnaturally large, brilliant with an uncanny light. His white face was disfigured by many days' growth of black and stubbly beard, his fingers were yellow with the stain of nicotine. By the side of his couch was a small table and a miniature roulette board. Close to it was the seat from which the woman had risen. By the side of the roulette board was a strip of paper and a pencil. The man spoke to the woman in a language

of which Mr. Billingham knew nothing, and pointed to her seat. She replied soothingly. He shook his head and broke out once more. Then he coughed. She leaned over and patted his shoulder.

"You had better wait for a moment," she said, turning to Mr. Billingham. "Every day we do this," she went on, pointing to the board. "We spin twenty numbers. I take the results down and go to the Casino and back the same numbers in the same order. It is the only thing which distracts his thoughts, since he cannot go himself. We have finished seventeen. Will you wait?"

"I will wait," Mr. Billingham agreed.

The woman resumed her seat, threw in the ball, and turned the wheel. The man leaned over, watching it eagerly. He took note of the number with a little air of satisfaction and muttered something, whilst the woman scribbled it down in pencil upon her list. Twice more the operation was repeated. Then the man leaned back. He spoke a few faint words, apparently in Russian. The woman appeared to assent, and he closed his eyes. She drew Mr. Billingham a little on one side.

"He wants me to hurry off down to the Casino," she explained. "He says if I do so he will let you examine him."

Mr. Billingham opened his mouth and closed it again. There were tears streaming down the woman's terrible face; a sob choked in her throat.

"I am afraid——" Mr. Billingham began.

HE stopped short. The door was opened. A man stood there: corpulent, unprepossessing. He wore only a pair of black trousers and a flannel shirt. He was the man who had closed the gate. He spoke to the woman again in that incomprehensible jargon. She listened and turned towards Mr. Billingham. Her face had hardened, her tone was suspicious.

"There is a man here who says that he is the doctor," she announced.

"He is probably right," Mr. Billingham admitted.

"Who are you, then?" she demanded.

"I came to see who fired the shot from this villa which killed Bruntingford," Mr. Billingham declared, keeping his hand near his hip pocket and his eyes wandering from the woman to the man.

The woman's face had been terrible before, but something of real fury gave it for a moment almost a diabolical expression. Her lips were parted. She remained, however, unexpectedly silent. There was a moan—a low moan, but ending in a still more terrible sound—from the man upon the couch.

"The doctor!" Mr. Billingham exclaimed.

She called out something to the servitor. A little dark man with a black bag entered. She pointed to the couch.

"Go out and wait," she ordered Mr. Billingham.

He went out into the dirty hall and sat upon a crazy cane chair. The atmosphere of the place stifled him. Presently he withdrew the bolts from the big door and found his way into the tangled wilderness of garden, which still remained beautiful. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead and waited. It was probably half an hour before anything happened. Then the woman came out. She advanced slowly towards him, and Mr. Billingham—who had never known fear—was conscious of a strange new sensation in his veins: a feeling that the sun had passed from the heavens and that there was sulphur in the air.

"You came to find out who fired that shot," she said. "I did."

"Why?" he demanded.

"That a dying man should end his days in peace," was the solemn answer. "That has arrived. Are you of the police? I am ready!"

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"The police do not know," he assured her, hoarsely. "What about him?"

"He is dead," she announced. "He died—just then."

Mr. Billingham twirled his hat in his hand. It was so sordid, incomprehensible, amazingly unreal. Through a little clump of olive trees he saw that the gate remained open.

"My affair here is finished," he said. "I will go."

She nodded.

"Go!" she assented. "You are fortunate," she added, a moment or two later, "that you did not come a few days ago with your question."

"You know, of course, that there was a great reward for information about him?"

"I have known it for years," she admitted. "Nevertheless, I kept him hidden. We had always two foes to fight—spies and starvation."

"And now about yourself?" he asked.

She stared at him. Another button of her dress had given way. She seemed more ragged than ever.

"Myself!" she repeated. "What does it matter? He is dead!"

(Another story in this series will appear next month.)

6d Under the Plate

By

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

ILLUSTRATED BY WEBSTER MURRAY

THE man bent his head back and poured down his throat the dregs of his tea, slipped sixpence under his plate, rose, bowed not ungracefully to all, picked up his portfolio, and left Lady Coker's drawing-room.

I WAS there for the week-end. The Cokers were the crowned king and queen of North-west Sussex, and their house was as good a place as a man might find for sleeping and eating and flirting free in warm weather. John Evelyn mentions it in his Diary, and once a princess was divorced after staying there.

You can see the terrace with its green and white basket chairs, the carp pond below, then gardens with beds of everything except red geraniums, which remind one too much of hot silk hats and hot white spats, and a distant sheet of water into which young people plunged early on Sunday mornings, some of them in their all-night silk pyjamas.

You can see the house of silver-grey stone, the long windows open so that you may peer into the cool, dark drawing-room lit with flashes of silver and porcelain. Now meet the Cokers.

Sir Lancelot was very pink and blue and yellow, like a Cadogan Cowper girl in the Royal Academy. His skin was pink and his eyes were blue and his hair was yellow. He would be forty years of age and he had won about forty decorations. Some of them were for bravery in the war. Lady Coker was small and lovely, with violet eyes and tiny teeth like the petals of the marguerite. She had the whim to dislike London—"All dirt and conversation"—and ran a sort of *salon* in the country. During the week she sewed, sang, wrote poetry, and fussed over two abandoned children. Her week-end she devoted to the entertainment of long, short, lean, and fat people who justified their existence by the avoidance of honest toil. They made things: books, pictures, songs.

I was sitting on the terrace when the man arrived. Oh, yes, he was readily recognizable as a man. His hands were man's hands, and a man's eyes flashed from above the high cheekbones. He towered over us; but do not forget that we were sitting down. I was amused at his ragged, black beard. Douglas Ingles, who was by my side, turned a reproachful Foreign Office eye on the bagginess of the man's trousers. Lady Coker clapped her hands at the sight of a portfolio under his arm.

"You've finished some more?" she cried, her mouth open as if to receive a whole ripe golden greengage, and her eyebrows pushed up into her chocolate hair.

"Six," said the man, and sat down in a low chair. His legs stretched out past me, past Ingles, off the terrace, and I daresay into the next county. I did not turn my head to inquire.

"Oh, you know everybody, of course. Everybody knows Mr. Errot, don't they?" Apparently everybody did with the exception of me. I just nodded to the newcomer because I can't make speeches. "I'm sorry to say I have not had the pleasure before. Oh, so sorry! This is Mr. Brown. This is Mr. Robinson. How do you do? Oh, very well, thanks. You, too, I trust?" All that sort of thing. But I take a peculiar pleasure in being sullen and morose, and so am often left to go for walks by myself.

"Well, can't we see them?" asked Lady Coker. "No, here is tea. Let the children be fed, and then, if they don't soil their bibs, mother will show them a nice picture. You look hot, Mr. Errot."

"I have walked five miles and straight into the sun all the way." He spoke with a metallic voice that sounded like good times in a brass foundry.

"Then you must come indoors and I will get one of my halflings to fan you."

Mr. Errot went into the drawing-room. Ingles made faces at me behind his back.

"Seen him before?"

"Oh, yes. Often here. Paints well. And you can get them cheap."

"Live about here?"

"Yes. Got a nest in the undergrowth somewhere. Lance says the beaters'll put him up some day and he'll get shot. Rum old cock."

"Lance like him?"

"Ask him."

Sir Lancelot Coker came up from the tennis court with three other open-necked, perspiring males. One was a novelist who could not keep his pince-nez balanced on his wet nose.

"Errot's here, Lance. Horace wants to know if you like him." My name is not Horace.

Lancelot sat beside me and showed his white Cadogan Cowper teeth. "He's a pet of Ann's. Everyone says he really can paint. If he's brought some pictures, go in and buy one."

"Gosh! I can't afford pictures."

"You can afford three half-crowns. Go in and have a looksee."

TEA was being served in the drawing-room. Some people lay on couches, others crouched on their haunches in corners. A few, including Errot, sat at the big centre table. There was a sound by day of the crunching of watercress.

Errot's portfolio lay on the table, as yet unopened. I took a chair next to him and began to bite and relish radishes.

Errot looked at me very directly. I became aware that I was probably the only person there whom he did not know.

"What is this gentleman's name?" asked Errot of Lady Coker.

"Wednesday is his name, my dear genius, because he comes from Sheffield." It is not, and I do not. "Show him your pictures."

Errot eyed me suspiciously and slowly untied the ribbons of his portfolio. Then he took out a few sheets and put the portfolio on the floor by his chair.

I looked at him, wearing my well-known smile of eager anticipation. He frowned and sat with his paintings held to his breast.

"Are you poor?" presently he asked me.

"So much so," I explained, "that church mice call me a blackleg. So poor that I sponge on Lady Coker, who is like an exquisite white yacht on sun-soaked waters."

"He pays me. He pays me," smiled my hostess.

"Then you are a parasite," said Errot.

Now a parasite is a thing that hangs on others and supports itself on their juices, and I began to hate Errot.

"You will probably want to buy my pictures because everyone here has something of mine already. I like selling to the rich best."

"Because they pay more. Ha, ha!"

Errot glared balefully.

"I like selling to the rich because I condescend when I sell. When I sell to the poor I cannot patronize."

He spread out his new water-colours, and three or four gathered round to look at them.

My eye was caught at once by a farm sketch. A man coming in from his work, hot and walking heavily. A panting dog and a pale child sitting in dust under a hedge. Sun-beaten trees and a gnat-haunted pool. The thing was laden with atmosphere. He had painted, of course, to please himself, and it was the work of a true artist.

"Can I buy this?"

"Yes."

"I hope your price will be friendly to my purse."

"From the rich I would ask seven shillings and sixpence. From you I will take six shillings."

I stared at him. The value was at least ten guineas. I could sell it for that to a hundred dealers, and from one I might

get fifty. Something in the man's eye told me that if I wanted the picture I must not comment on the price. I therefore produced six shillings, which the artist pocketed.

The other pictures were quickly sold. One, similar to that which I had secured, was sold for seven shillings and sixpence to a rich man. For another, larger one, the artist asked fifteen shillings.

"Why fifteen shillings?" I ventured to ask.

"Because it is twice the size of that sold for seven-and-six." I looked away from the man and saw that the others were all smiling at me.

Errot swallowed the dregs of his tea, put sixpence under his plate, rose, bowed, and went away with his empty portfolio.

For some time I sat as one stunned. Lady Coker had followed Errot, cooing after him as a pigeon following a crane. I was alone with my painful discovery. No one else had seen what had happened. Some were floating back to tennis, some were drifting into dreams. I saw no man or woman in whom I could confide.

"You've finished some more?" Lady Coker cried, at the sight of a portfolio under his arm.

How did I know that it was sixpence that he put under his plate? I did not know at the moment. I knew merely that it was a coin which I had seen him take from his waistcoat pocket. Now what sort of a man is it who keeps money in his waistcoat pocket? Waistcoat pockets are for platinum card-cases, and for nothing else, since watches went out.

And what sort of a man, pray, is it who will tip a servant for a meal in a private house? I ask you. Was the fellow absent-minded? Did he take Lady Coker's drawing-room for the Corner House? Did he, when he reached the hall, look for a cash-desk and observe, "Jove, I've come away without my bill?" Really, artist or no artist, such embarrassing people should be exterminated.

Of course I discovered that the tip was sixpence when the maids cleared the dishes. The one who lifted the plate smiled when she saw the sixpence, and then she did something that pleased me greatly. She picked it up and put it on the top of a little writing-table. I had rather she had blushed. But it was, of course, everything that she did not pocket it. How I wish that clown of an artist knew how he had been snubbed, and by a parlourmaid.

I had a mind to speak to my host about the matter. He and I were intimate enough for me to sneer at one of his guests. Two friends can always be uncharitable together, but mere acquaintances cannot afford to be spiteful about anything. I felt that he ought to know that he was harbouring unawares a person who did not know how to behave himself.

I got a moment with Lancelot before the dressing-gong went.

"Rum chap, that artist," I began. "He went off rather abruptly."

"Yes, you'll see more of him to-night, though. Ann has asked him to dinner."

Ann called from above at that moment, and Lancelot went up the stairs three at a time. She has that sort of voice.

I was left pondering. Coming to dinner, was he? Well, if he left a sixpenny tip after his tea, what on earth would he leave after a full meal? I confess that I became cold for the first time that day.

WAITING in the drawing-room before being assigned a female companion—and I knew I would get one of the Coker halflings—I made a point of seeing if the sixpence still reposed on the writing-table. It did not. What had happened to it? Did the maid return for it when the room was empty? Or had Sir Lancelot or Lady Coker disposed of it? I might ask them later in the evening. It would give me an opportunity to be bright! I should begin by saying, "I wonder if anybody in this house can clear up the mystery of a sixpence?" I would not tell all, of course. I might even affect that I had lost the coin. And then Lady Coker might say: "I found one on a table and sent it off at once to my bank."

Now Errot reappeared. He was not in evening dress, but had changed his clothes. The second suit was darker than the first and fairly tidy, though it was evident that the trousers had never been pressed. It so chanced that there was no female companion for him, not even a halfling, and so it befell that I sat next him at dinner. Yes, I sat next the man who tipped sixpence for his tea in a private house, without so much as a woman between.

I did not get very much chance to talk to him, as I was given to take in a woman and not a halfling, and this living loveliness made me tell her the story of my life. At least I think so. She was one of those women who find out all about you without permitting you to bore them. But I did manage to note what Errot ate and drank.

For some time it appeared as if he would be content with olives and water. So, thought I, must hermits have fed, hermits who were haunted by beautiful dreams such as the woman who was making me talk. I could have kicked him when he waved away a sole cooked in white wine. He fell to chewing bread and I was glad that it was white, for I am sure the creature would have preferred wholemeal.

Upon the grouse, however, he fell like some Scottish wild cat—cat because of his pounce, wild because of his squared elbows, and Scottish because he rolled his r's as he masticated. Moreover he shovelled the crisp, crackling potatoes into his mouth in a way that suggested to me that he was about to take part in a tug-of-war contest and must at all costs add a stone to his weight. I saw that my beautiful female companion had noticed this rapine of the potatoes, and smiled at her lifted eyebrows.

"You would probably like to do it yourself," I risked.

"He reminds me of a popular little book," she smiled, "Hips Ancient and Modern."

Errot seemed sated after his grouse. He sat and sneered while we ate later dishes.

"You have no appetite," I ventured once.

"My physical craving is satisfied," he retorted. "It is exceedingly foolish to continue to eat when one's stomach is easy."

I then went on telling my radiant companion all about how far I could swim.

Errot accepted nothing further with the exception of a cup of coffee. He sipped this when the men were left alone to revel in their brandy. I tried to make him talk now, but as he was very curt I gave it up. I noticed moreover that the effort was made by no one else.

Presently Errot put his hand in his waistcoat pocket and I heard the chink of coins. The blood flew to my head and I stared down at my plate, while my hair seemed to rise in straight flames. Were others watching him? No, all eyes were on Sir Lancelot, who was telling a story.

Errot put more than one coin under his plate, waited till Sir Lancelot had finished, rose and bade us all good-night. As I watched the strange creature leave the room, Douglas Ingles started another yarn.

Affecting to listen to Ingles, I contrived to move Errot's plate.. Under it were coins to the value of three shillings and fourpence!

I laughed hysterically, highly, loudly, shrilly.

Ingles scowled at me. "I haven't come to the point yet."

"Haven't you? Haven't you really? Then pray continue, my dear Ingles. And I will then tell a story that will shock your vaso-motor system."

When Ingles had finished, somewhat sulkily, all eyes were turned on me.

"Quite right," I nodded. "I can hold my tongue no longer. The sixpence was bad enough, though I might have disciplined myself to silence about that. But about three-and-fourpence, my lads, oh, dear no. I can't keep quiet about three-and-fourpence."

The others looked puzzled and were about to abuse me, but I checked them.

"Look," I cried, and swept everything away that interfered with a view of Errot's monstrous tip.

"Oh, that would be Errot," said Sir Lancelot. All the others nodded and cried affirmatives.

"Of course it is Errot. There surely isn't another man here or anywhere who would

leave tips under his plate in a private house. You don't mean to tell me that you know about it."

"Good Lord! That's not a tip," said Sir Lancelot, and his irritating companions supplied echoing negatives.

"Then what the devil is it?"

"He's paying for his meal. How much is it? Three-and-fourpence. Very fair. He doesn't eat much. In fact, I think we make a profit out of his teas."

I held my head. "You're driving me mad, Lance; you're driving me mad. This is the second time I've been here and I swear that I hadn't the faintest notion that you took in paying guests. I swear I thought you were a gentleman, I mean that I was, I mean that—oh, what on earth do I mean?"

"Listen, old man," said Sir Lancelot, gently. "No wonder you're puzzled. I forgot that you had never met Errot before. He's a Sanguinadelphian, you know."

"A whatelphian?".

"A Sanguinadelphian. It's a religious sect. Forbidden to accept hospitality. Recommended to break bread frequently with their fellows but must pay their share. Starvation only excuse for cadging, and the debt must be paid afterwards if possible."

"Then he thinks three-and-fourpence is a fair price for his dinner to-night?" I inquired, in cracked soprano tones.

"Certainly. He drinks no wine, you know. I don't know how he works it out, but I'm sure it's an honest valuation."

"Don't you complain," reproached Douglas Ingles. "You got one of his jolly pictures for six bob."

"Exactly," commented Sir Lancelot. "You see now why he sells his pictures so cheaply. The rules of his religion forbid him to ask more than it is necessary for him to earn to keep body and soul together."

I nodded, tried to speak normally. "And what is the name of the sect?"

"Sanguinadelphians."

"That means brothers in blood or brothers of blood."

"Does it? Maybe. We've always guessed that the founder must have been run in for using bad language in the Adelphi. But you may be right, Juggles, you may be right."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 146.

(The Second of the Series.)

THE map of Spain will show each promontory:
To Britain, names of never-fading glory.

1. Say, where is perseverance found?
   Go to a quarry, look around.
2. "The old is better"—he disputes it,
   And, not content with that, uproots it.
3. Does she resemble Joan the Maid?
   At least, she practised the same trade.
4. You say—and who'll deny you're right?—
   Slight it may be, yet still a slight.
5. The love of gold mars many a man:
   It rendered her an "also ran."
6. To enter such apartment fear:
   'Tis seeking death to enter here.
7. I am no use without my twin:
   To find me, at the hearth begin.
8. Designed to give a monarch fits,
   By guns and gales 'twas blown to bits.
9. Silence is golden, I declare it.
   Do you agree with me? Then wear it.

KING COLE.

Answers to Acrostic No. 146 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on September 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 145.

OUR hero sat upon a wall,
Our hero had a mighty fall,
And all the royal steeds and men
Could not restore our hero then.

1. 'Tis on your shoulders, and on mine,
   The word is seen in later line.
2. A tail, folk waiting in a row,
   Here neither tail nor head must show.
3. Musical note, or drop, we name;
   Read either way, it is the same.
4. Machine hydraulic here we view;
   Equally well, a dancing shoe.
5. It shades from sun, it shields from rain;
   One letter change, a coin is plain.
6. Occurring every year, we see
   Within a man of high degree.

REMUS.

1. H	e a	D
2. U	e	U
3. M	i n i	M
4. P	u m	P
5. T	e n	T
6. Y	e a r l	Y

NOTES.—Light 2. Queue. 5. Cent. 6. Earl.

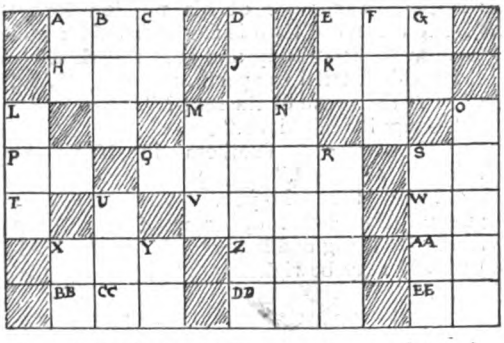
Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and he will endeavour to reply.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

768.—CROSS-FIGURE PUZZLE.

IT has occurred to me to make a Cross-Figure Puzzle somewhat on the lines of the familiar "Cross-Word Puzzle." The puzzle is to put a single figure in every one of the white squares so that they add up correctly as in the table below. Thus, the three



figures in the Horizontal A must add up to 9. The two figures in the Vertical A will add up to 4. Then all the Diagonals running downwards from the left (like J, N, R) are called "DOWN"; those running upwards from the left (like X, U, Q, M, J) are called "UP." In making your addition you stop at the blacked-out squares as in spelling in the case of "Cross-Words." The puzzle is really very easy if you discover the right way of getting to work, which I will make clear next month. The o does not occur anywhere in the arrangement.

HORIZONTALS—A, 9; E, 16; H, 12; K, 4; M, 8; P, 13; Q, 32; S, 5; V, 8; W, 3; X, 9; Z, 13; A A, 7; B B, 9; D D, 18; E E, 8. VERTICALS—A, 4; B, 15; C, 7; D, 34; E, 4; F, 16; G, 8; L, 18; M, 11; N, 22; O, 17; R, 18; S, 10; U, 9; X, 9; Y, 7. DIAGONALS (Down)—B, 15; F, 11; H, 26; J, 19; K, 11; L, 26. DIAGONALS (Up)—L, 11; T, 21; X, 35; C C, 12; Z, 20; E E, 8.

769.—TWO CYCLISTS.

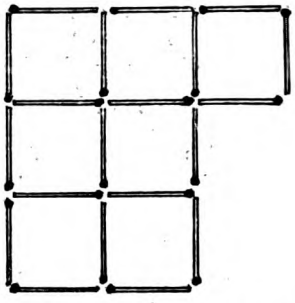
Two cyclists ride from Abbotminster to Bunkerton—a distance of 200 miles—and return. Atkins goes at 12 miles per hour and returns at 8 miles per hour, thus taking $41\frac{2}{3}$ hours for the total journey. Baxter goes both ways at 10 miles per hour, taking 40 hours for the total journey. "Now," says a correspondent, "seeing that both men ride at the average speed of 10 miles per hour, why does Atkins take longer than Baxter?" Perhaps the reader can explain the little paradox.

770.—A CHARADE.

MY *second* is double my *first*,
My *first* is but half of my *second*;
And I am sure you'll admit that my *whole*
Is ten times the latter when reckoned.

771.—ANOTHER LITTLE MATCH PUZZLE.

THIS is another little perplexity for our more juvenile readers. Place the 20 matches as shown in our illustration. The puzzle is to remove 3 matches and



replace them so as to leave 5 perfect squares instead of 7. Of course there must be no duplicated matches or loose ends and the remaining ones must not be shifted.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

763.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

NUMBER the white squares of the board from 1 to 32 downwards from left to right. Then play as follows: 15—10, 7—14 (a); 22—18, 26—19, 18—2. Drawn. (a) Of course, if 6—15, 23—18, etc.

764.—A ROWING PUZZLE.

THE correct answer is $31\frac{8}{17}$ minutes. The crew can row $\frac{1}{8}$ of the distance per min. on still water, and the stream does $\frac{1}{12}$ of the distance per min. The difference and sum of these two fractions are $\frac{7}{60}$ and $\frac{17}{120}$. Therefore, against the stream would take $\frac{120}{7}$ min. (or $8\frac{4}{7}$ min.), and with the stream $\frac{120}{17}$ (or $31\frac{8}{17}$ min.).

765.—MISSING WORDS.

THE words in their order are PARTS, SPRAT, STRAP, TRAPS.

766.—SHEEP STEALING.

THE number in the flock must have been 1,025 sheep. It will be found that no mutilation of any sheep was necessary.

767.—FIND THE WORD.

THE word was BIFURCATED, which contains the first six letters of the alphabet and I, R, T, U. The word FABRICATED would also serve, except for the fact that the four extra letters, A, I, R, T, include a repeated A.

G.WODEHOUSE H.DE VERE STACPOOLE
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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for October, 1925.

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Frontispiece: What was it? They could not tell themselves. They only knew that the black shadows at the top of the staircase were moving! They were rushing swiftly and noiselessly downwards!

		PAGE.
THE LAND OF MIST ... ...

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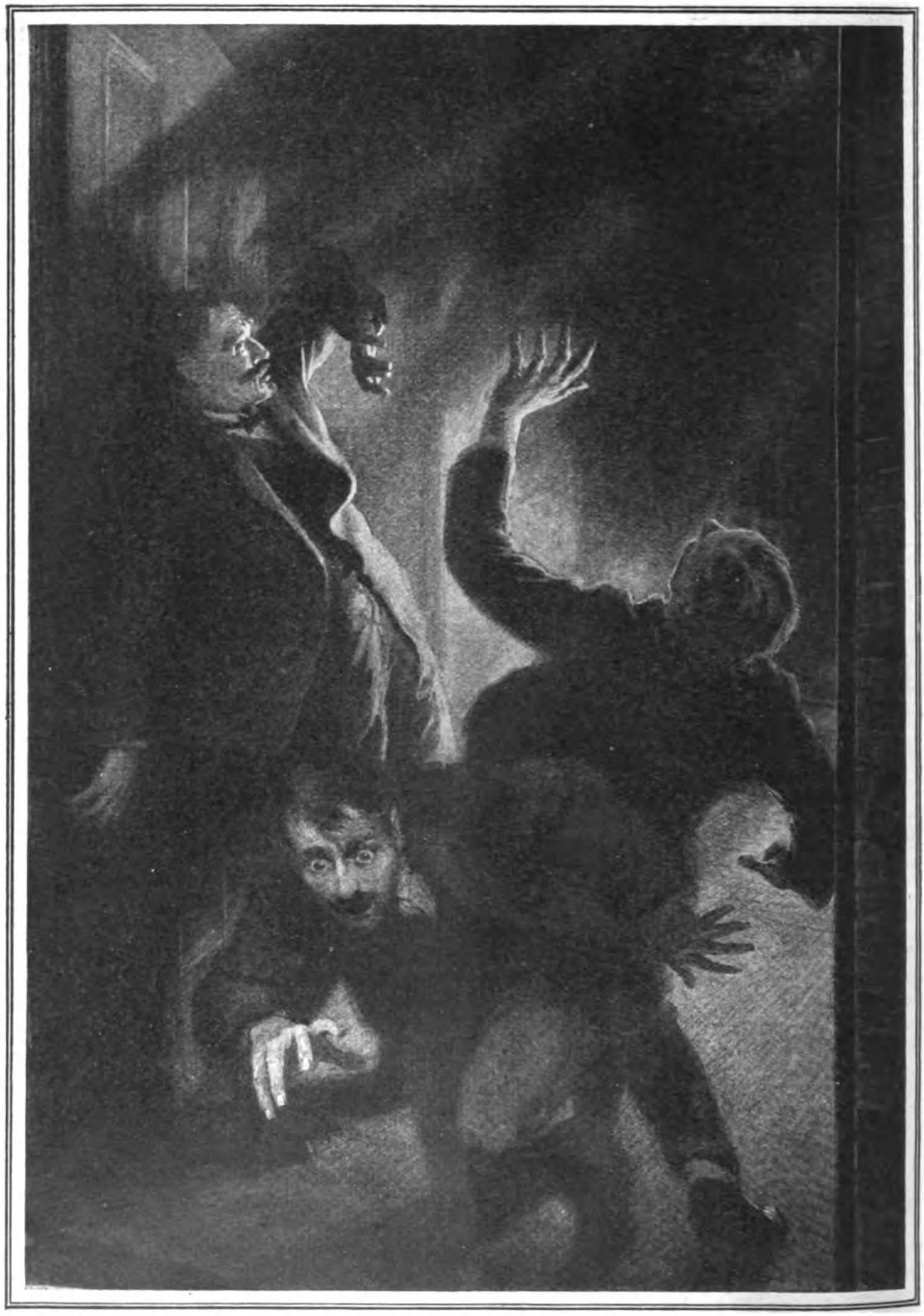
See the "Alpine" Undies advt. on page 24.

OCTOBER, 1925.



WHAT WAS IT? THEY COULD NOT TELL THEMSELVES. THEY ONLY KNEW THAT THE BLACK SHADOWS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRCASE WERE MOVING! THEY WERE RUSHING SWIFTLY AND NOISELESSLY DOWNWARDS!

(See page 332.)

THE LAND OF MIST

OR

The Quest of Edward Malone

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY
F. E. HILEY

VIII.

IN WHICH THREE INVESTIGATORS COME UPON A DARK SOUL.

LORD JOHN ROXTON had returned from Central African heavy game shooting, and had at once carried out a series of Alpine ascents which had satisfied and surprised everyone except himself.

"Top of the Alps is becomin' a perfect bear-garden," said he. "Short of Everest there don't seem to be any decent privacy left."

His advent into London was acclaimed by a dinner given in his honour at the Travellers' by the Heavy Game Society. The occasion was private and there were no reporters, but Lord John Roxton's speech was fixed *verbatim* in the minds of all his audience and has been imperishably preserved. He writhed for twenty minutes under the flowery and eulogistic periods of the President, and rose himself in the state of confused indignation which the Briton feels when he is publicly approved. "Oh, I say! By Jove! What?" was his oration, after which he resumed his seat and perspired profusely.

Malone was first aware of Lord John's return through McArdle, the crabbed old red-headed news editor, whose bald dome projected farther and farther from its ruddy fringe as the years still found him slaving at the most grinding of tasks. He retained his keen scent of what was good copy, and it was this sense of his which caused him one winter morning to summon Malone to his presence. He removed the long glass tube which he used as a cigarette-holder from his lips, and he blinked through his big round glasses at his subordinate.

"You know that Lord John Roxton is back in London?"

"I had not heard."

"Aye, he's back. Dootless you've heard that he was wounded in the war. He led a small column in East Africa and made a wee war of his own till he got an elephant bullet through his chest. Oh, he's done fine since then, or he couldn't be climbin' these mountains. He's a deevil of a man and aye stirring up something new."

"What is the latest?" asked Malone, eyeing a slip of paper which McArdle was waving between his finger and thumb.

"Well, that's where he impinges on you. I was thinking maybe you could hunt in couples, and there would be copy in it. There's a leaderette in *The Evening Standard*. He handed it over. It ran thus:—

"A quaint advertisement in the columns of a contemporary shows that the famous Lord John Roxton, third son of the Duke of Pomfret, is seeking fresh worlds to conquer. Having exhausted the sporting adventures of this terrestrial globe he is now turning to those of the dim, dark, and dubious regions of psychic research. He is in the market apparently for any genuine specimen of a haunted house, and is open to receive information as to any violent or dangerous manifestation which calls for investigation. As Lord John Roxton

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is a man of resolute character and one of the best revolver shots in England, we would warn any practical joker that he would be well-advised to stand aside and leave this matter to those who are said to be as impervious to bullets as their supporters are to common sense."

McArdle gave his dry chuckle at the concluding words.

"I'm thinking they are getting pairsonal there, friend Malone, for if you are no a supporter, you're well on the way. But are you no of the opeenion that this chiel and you between you might put up a spook and get two racy columns off him?"

"Well, I can see Lord John," said Malone. "He's still, I suppose, in his old rooms in the Albany? I would wish to call in any case, so I can open this up as well."

THUS it was that in the late afternoon, just as the murk of London broke into dim circles of silver, the Pressman found himself once more walking down Vigo Street and accosting the porter at the dark entrance of the old-fashioned chambers. Yes, Lord John Roxton was in, but a gentleman was with him. He would take a card. Presently he returned with word that, in spite of the previous visitor, Lord John would see Malone at once. An instant later he had been ushered into the old luxurious rooms, with their trophies of war and of the chase. The owner of them with outstretched hand was standing at the door, long, thin, austere, with the same gaunt, whimsical, Don Quixote face as of old. There was no change save that he was more aquiline and his eyebrows jutted more thickly over his reckless, restless eyes.

"Hullo, young fellah!" he cried. "I was hopin' you'd draw this old covert once more. I was comin' down to the office to look you up. Come in! Come in! Let me introduce you to the Reverend Charles Mason."

A very tall, thin clergyman, who was coiled up in a large basket chair, gradually unwound himself and held out a bony hand to the new-comer. Malone was aware of two very earnest and human grey eyes looking searchingly into his, and of a broad, welcoming smile which disclosed a double row of excellent teeth. It was a worn and weary face, the tired face of the spiritual fighter, but it was very kindly and companionable, none the less. Malone had heard of the man, a Church of England vicar, who had left his model parish and the church which he had built himself in order to preach freely the doctrines of Christianity, with the new psychic knowledge superadded.

"Why, I never seem to get away from the Spiritualists!" he exclaimed.

"You never will, Mr. Malone," said the lean clergyman, chuckling. "The world never will until it has absorbed this new knowledge which God has sent. You can't get away from it. It is too big. At the present moment in this great city there is not a place where men or women meet that it does not come up. And yet you would not know it from the Press."

"Well, you can't level that reproach at *The Daily Gazette*," said Malone. "Possibly you may have read my own descriptive articles."

"Yes, I read them. They are at least better than the awful sensational nonsense which the London Press usually serves up, save when they ignore it altogether. To read a paper like *The Times* you would never know that this vital movement existed at all. The only editorial allusion to it that I can ever remember was in a leading article, when the great paper announced that it would believe in it when it found it could, by means of it, pick out more winners on a race-card than by other means."

"Doosed useful, too," said Lord John. "It's just what I should have said myself. What?"

The clergyman's face was grave and he shook his head.

"That brings me back to the object of my visit," he said. He turned to Malone. "I took the liberty of calling upon Lord John Roxton in connection with his advertisement to say that if he went on such a quest with a good intention no better work could be found in the world, but if he did it out of a love of sport, following some poor earth-bound soul in the same spirit as he followed the white rhinoceros of the Lido, he might be playing with fire."

"Well, padre, I've been playin' with fire all my life, and that's nothin' new. What I mean—if you want me to look at this ghost business from the religious angle, there's nothin' doin', for the Church of England that I was brought up in fills my very modest need. But if it's got a spice of danger, as you say, then it's worth while. What?"

The Rev. Charles Mason smiled his kindly, toothsome grin.

"Incorrigible, is he not?" he said to Malone. "Well, I can only wish you a fuller comprehension of the subject." He rose as if to depart.

"Wait a bit, padre!" cried Lord John, hurriedly. "When I'm explorin', I begin by ropin' in a friendly native. I expect you're just the man. Won't you come with me?"

"Where to?"

"Well, sit down and I'll tell you." He rummaged among a pile of letters on his desk. "Fine selection of spooks!" he said. "I got on the track of over twenty by the first post. This is an easy winner, though. Read it for yourself. Lonely house, man driven mad, tenants boltin' in the night, horrible spectre. Sounds all right—what?"

The clergyman read the letter with puckered brows. "It seems a bad case," said he.

"Well, suppose you come along. What? Maybe you can help clear it up."

The Rev. Mason pulled out a pocket-almanac. "I have a service for ex-Service men on Wednesday, and a lecture the same evening."

"But we could start to-day."

"It's a long way."

"Only Dorsetshire. Three hours."

"What is your plan?"

"Well, I suppose a night in the house should do it."

"If there is any poor soul in trouble it becomes a duty. Very well, I will come."

"And surely there is room for me?" pleaded Malone.

"Of course there is, young fellah! I expect that old, red-headed bird at the office sent you round with no other purpose. Ah, I thought so. Well, you can write an adventure that is not perfect bilge for a change. What? There's a train from Waterloo at eight o'clock. We can meet there, and I'll have a look in at old man Challenger as I pass."

THEY dined together in the train and after dinner reassembled in their first-class carriage, which is the snuggest mode of travel which the world can show. Roxton, behind a big black cigar, was full of his visit to Challenger.

"The old dear is the same as ever. Bit my head off once or twice in his own familiar way. Talked unadulterated tripe. Says I've got brain-softenin' if I could think there was such a thing as a real spook. 'When you're dead you're dead.' That's the old man's cheery slogan. Surveyin' his contemporaries, he said extinction was a doosed good thing! 'It's the only hope in the world,' said he. 'Fancy the awful prospect if they survived.' Wanted to give me a bottle of chlorine to chuck at the ghost. I told him that if my automatic was not a spook-stopper, nothin' else would serve. Tell me, padre, is this the first time you've been on safari after this kind of game?"

"You treat the matter too lightly, Lord John," said the clergyman, gravely. "You have clearly had no experience of it. In answer to your question I may say that I have several times tried to help in similar cases."

"And you take it seriously?" asked Malone, making notes for his article.

"Very, very seriously."

"What do you think these influences are?"

"I am no authority upon the general question. You know Algernon Mailey, the barrister, do you not? He could give you facts and figures. I approach the subject rather perhaps from the point of view of instinct and emotion. I remember Mailey lecturing on Professor Bozzano's book on ghosts, where over five hundred well-authenticated instances were given, every one of them sufficient to establish an *à priori* case. There is Flammarion, too. You can't laugh away evidence of that kind."

"I've read Bozzano and Flammarion, too," said Malone, "but it is your own experience and conclusions that I want."

"Well, if you quote me, remember that I do not look on myself as a great authority on psychic research. Wiser brains than mine may come along and give some other explanation. Still, what I have seen has led me to certain conclusions. One of them is to think that there is some truth in the theosophical idea of shells."

"What is that?"

"They imagined that all spirit bodies near the earth were empty shells or husks from which the real Entity had departed. Now, of course, we know that a general statement of that sort is nonsense, for we could not get the glorious communications which we do get from anything but high intelligences. But we also must beware of generalizations. They are not *all* high intelligences. Some are so low that I think the creature is purely external and is an appearance rather than a reality."

"But why should it be there?"

"Yes, that is the question. It is usually allowed that there is the natural body, as St. Paul called it, which is dissolved at death, and the etheric or spiritual body, which survives and functions upon an etheric plane. Those are the essential things. But we may really have as many coats as an onion, and there may be a mental body which may shed itself at any spot where great mental or emotional strain has been experienced. It may be a dull automatic simulacrum and yet carry something of our appearance and thoughts."

"Well," said Malone, "that would to some extent get over the difficulty, for I could never imagine that a murdered man or his victim could spend whole centuries re-acting the old crime. What would be the sense of it?"

"Quite right, young fellah," said Lord John. "There was a pal of mine, Archie Soames, the gentleman jock, who had an old place in Berkshire. Well, Nell Gwynne had lived there once, and he was ready to think that she might have cast a shell and left some thought-image of herself behind her."

"You said you had experiences of your own."

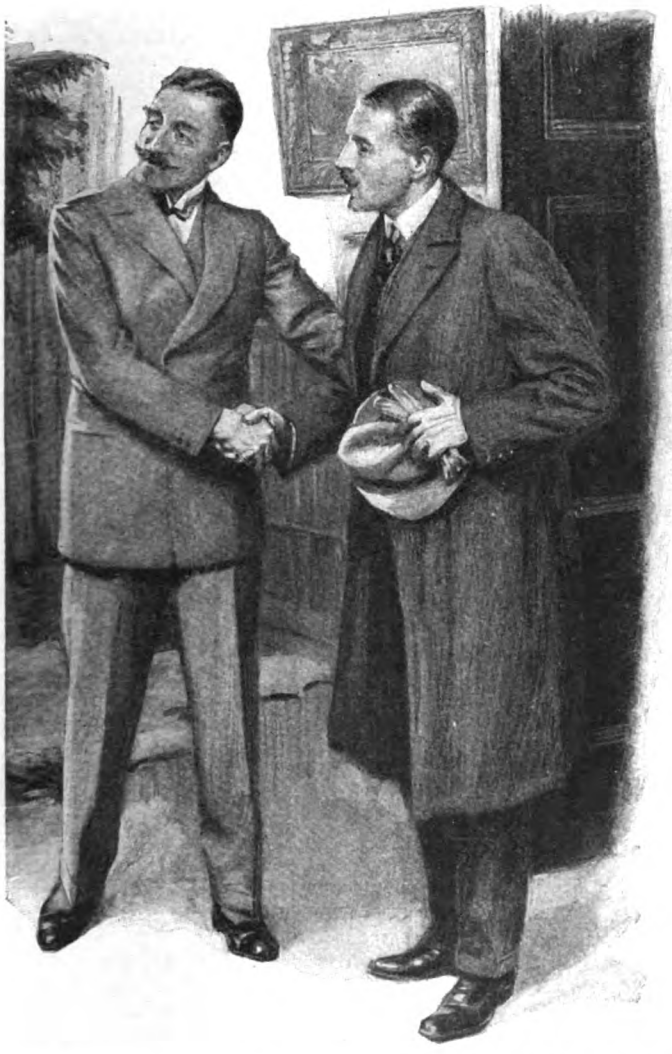
swear he met her a dozen times in the passage. Archie never flinched at the big jump at the Grand National, but, by Jove! he flinched at those passages after dark. Doosed fine woman she was and all that, but dash it all! What I mean—one has to draw the line—what?"

"Quite so!" the clergyman answered. "You can't imagine that the real soul of a vivid personality like Nell could spend centuries walking those passages. But if by chance she had ate her heart out in that house, brooding and fretting, one could

"I had one before ever I knew anything of Spiritualism. I hardly expect that you will believe me, but I assure you it is true. I was a very young curate up in the North. There was a house in the village which had a poltergeist, one of those very mischievous influences which cause so much trouble. I volunteered to exorcise it. We have an official form of exorcism in the Church, you know, so I thought that I was well-armed. I stood in the drawing-room, which was the centre of the disturbances, with all the family on their knees beside me, and

I read the service. What do you think happened ?"

Mason's gaunt face broke into a sweetly humorous laugh. "Just as I reached Amen, when the creature should have



"Hullo, young fellah!" cried Lord John Roxton. "Come in! Come in! Let me introduce you to the Reverend Charles Mason."

been slinking away abashed, the big bear-skin hearth-rug stood up on end and simply enveloped me. I am ashamed to say that I was out of that house in two jumps. It was then that I learned that no formal religious proceeding has any effect at all."

"Then what has ?"

"Well, kindness and reason may do something. You see, they vary greatly. Some of these earth-bound or earth-interested creatures are neutral, like these simulacra or shells that I speak of. Others are essentially good, like these monks of Glastonbury, who have manifested so wonderfully of late years and are recorded by Bligh Bond. They are held to earth by a pious memory. Some are mischievous children like the poltergeists. And some—only a few, I hope—are deadly beyond words, strong, malevolent creatures too heavy with matter to rise above our earth plane—so heavy with matter that their vibrations may be low enough to affect the human retina and so to become visible. If they have been cruel, cunning brutes in life, they are cruel and cunning still, with more power to hurt. It is evil monsters of this kind who are let loose by our system of capital punishment, for they die with unused vitality which may be expended upon revenge."

"This Dryfont spook has a doosed bad record," said Lord John.

"Exactly. That is why I disapprove of levity. He seems to me to be the very type of the creature I speak of. Just as an octopus may have his den in some ocean cave, and come floating out an image of horror, to attack a swimmer, so I picture such a spirit lurking in the dark of the house which he curses by his presence, and ready to pounce upon all whom he can injure."

Malone's jaw began to drop.

"I say!" he exclaimed, "have we no protection ?"

"Yes, I think we have. If we had not, such a creature could devastate the earth.

Our protection is that there are white forces as well as dark ones. We may call them 'guardian angels,' as the Catholics do, or 'guides' or 'controls,' but whatever you call them, they really do exist and they guard us from evil on the spiritual plane."

"What about the chap who was driven dippy, padre? Where was your guide when the spook put the rug round you? What?"

"The power of our guides may depend upon our own worthiness. Evil may always win for a time. Good wins in the end. That's my experience in life."

Lord John Roxton shook his head.

"If good wins, then it runs a doosed long waitin' race, and most of us never live to see the finish. Look at those rubber devils that I had a scrap with up the Putumayo River. Where are they? What? Mostly in Paris havin' a good time. And the poor niggers they murdered: what about them?"

"Yes, we need faith sometimes. We have to remember that we don't see the end. 'To be continued in our next,' is the conclusion of every life-story. That's where the enormous value of the other world accounts comes in. They give us at least one chapter more."

"Where can I get that chapter?" asked Malone.

"There are many wonderful books, though the world has not yet learned to appreciate them—records of the life beyond. I remember one incident—you may take it as a parable, if you like—but it is really more than that. The dead rich man pauses before the lovely dwelling. His sad guide draws him away. 'It is not for you. It is for your gardener.' He shows him a wretched shack. 'You gave us nothing to build with. It was the best that we could do.' That may be the next chapter in the story of your rubber millionaires."

Roxton laughed grimly.

"I gave some of them a shack that was six foot long and two foot deep," said he. "No good shaking your head, padre. What I mean, I don't love my neighbour as myself, and never shall. I hate some of 'em like poison."

"Well, we should hate sin, and, for my own part, I have never been strong enough to separate sin from the sinner. How can I preach when I am as human and weak as anyone?"

"Why, that's the only preachin' I could listen to," said Lord John. "The chap in the pulpit is over my head. If he comes down to my level I have some use for him. Well, it strikes me we won't get much sleep to-night. We've just an hour before we reach Dryfont. Maybe we had better use it."

IT was past eleven o'clock of a cold, frosty night when the party reached their destination. The station of the little watering-place was almost deserted, but a small, fat man in a fur overcoat ran forward to meet them, and greeted them warmly.

"I am Mr. Belchamber, owner of the house. How do you do, gentlemen? I got your wire, Lord John, and everything is in order. It is indeed kind of you to come down. If you can do anything to ease my burden I shall indeed be grateful."

Mr. Belchamber led them across to the little Station Hotel, where they partook of sandwiches and coffee, which he had thoughtfully ordered. As they ate he told them something of his troubles.

"It isn't as if I was a rich man, gentlemen. I am a retired grazier and all my savings are in three houses. That is one of them, the Villa Maggiore. Yes, I got it cheap, that's true. But how could I think there was anything in this story of the mad doctor?"

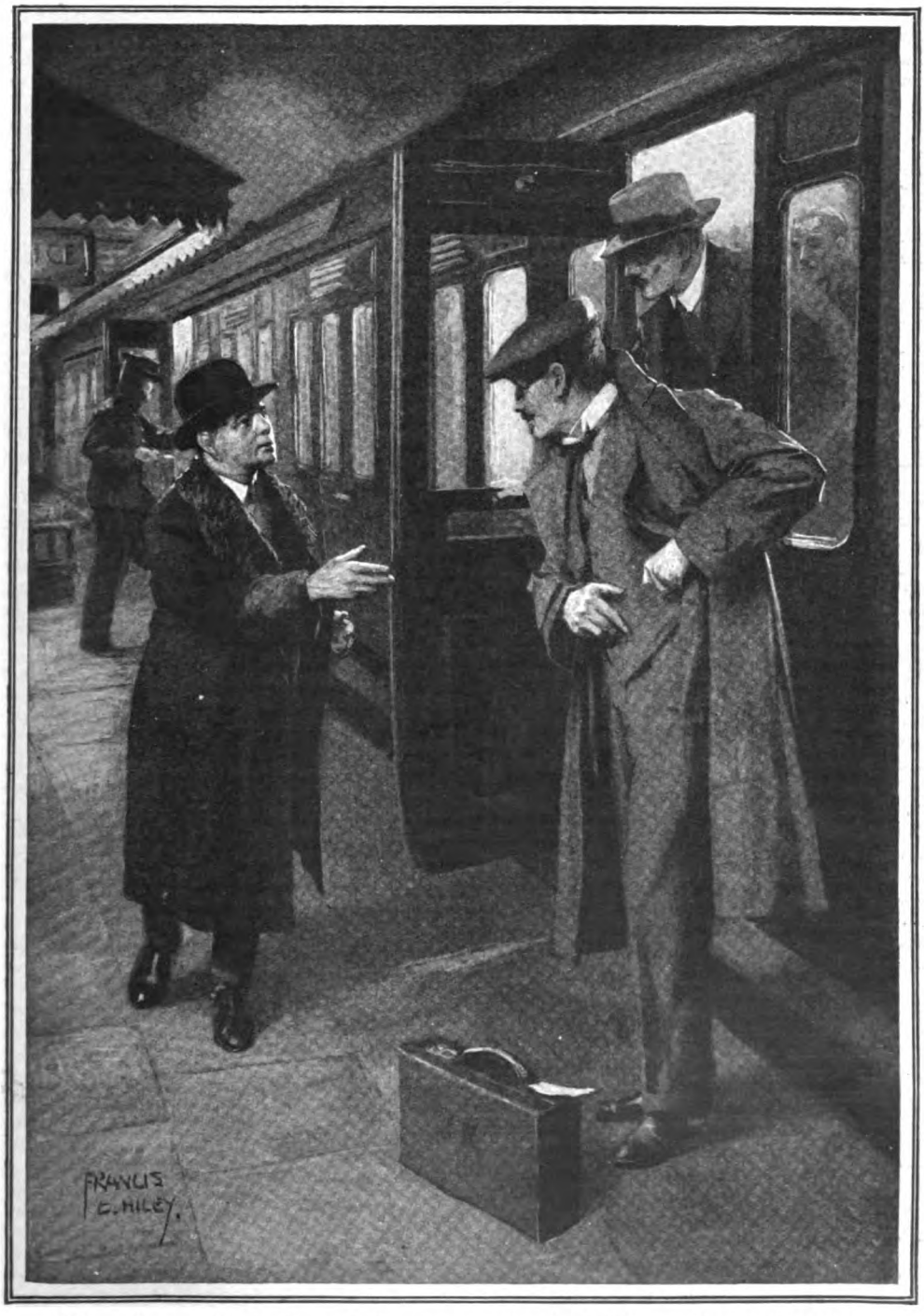
"Let's have the yarn," said Roxton, munching at a sandwich.

"He was there away back in Queen Victoria's time. I've seen him myself. A long, stringy, dark-faced kind of man, with a round back and a queer, shuffling way of walking. They say he had been in India all his life, and some thought he was hiding from some crime, for he would never show his face in the village and seldom came out till after dark. He broke a dog's leg with a stone, and there was some talk of having him up for it, but the people were afraid of him and no one would prosecute. The little boys would run past, for he would sit glowering and glooming in the front window. Then, one day he didn't take the milk in, and the same the next day, and so they broke the door open, and he was dead in his bath—but it was a bath of blood, for he had opened the veins of his arm. Tremayne was his name. No one here forgets it."

"And you bought the house?"

"Well, it was re-papered and painted and fumigated, and done up outside. You'd have said it was a new house. Then I let it to Mr. Jenkins, of the Brewery. Three days he was in it. I lowered the rent, and Mr. Beale, the retired grocer, took it. It was he who went mad—clean mad—after a week of it. And I've had it on my hands ever since—sixty pounds out of my income, and taxes to pay on it into the bargain. If you gentlemen can do anything, for God's sake do it! If not, it would pay me to burn it down."

The Villa Maggiore stood about half a mile from the town, on the slope of a low hill. Mr. Belchamber conducted them so far, and even up to the hall door. It was



"How do you do, gentlemen? I got your wire, Lord John, and everything is in order. It is indeed kind of you to come down."

certainly a depressing place, with a huge gambrel roof which came down over the upper windows and nearly obscured them. There was a half-moon, and by its light they could see that the garden was a tangle of scraggy winter vegetation, which had in some places almost overgrown the path. It was all very still, very gloomy, and very ominous.

"The door is not locked," said the owner. "You will find some chairs and a table in the sitting-room on the left of the hall. I had a fire lit there, and there is a bucketful of coals. You will be pretty comfortable, I hope. You won't blame me for not coming in, but my nerves are not so good as they were." With a few apologetic words the owner slipped away, and they were alone with their task.

LORD JOHN ROXTON had brought a strong electric torch. On opening the mildewed door, he flashed a tunnel of light down the passage, uncarpeted and dreary, which ended in a broad, straight wooden staircase leading to the upper floor. There were doors on either side of the passage. That on the right led into a large, cheerless, empty room, with a derelict lawn-mower in one corner and a pile of old books and journals. There was a corresponding room upon the left which was a much more cheery apartment. A brisk fire burned in the grate, there were three comfortable chairs, and a deal table with a water carafe, a bucket of coals, and a few other amenities. It was lit by a large oil-lamp. The clergyman and Malone drew up to the fire, for it was very cold, but Lord John completed his preparations. From a little handbag he extracted his automatic pistol, which he put upon the mantelpiece. Then he produced a packet of candles, placing two of them in the hall. Finally he took a ball of worsted and tied strings of it across the back passage and across the opposite door.

"We will have one look round," said he, when his preparations were complete. "Then we can wait down here and take what comes."

The upper passage led at right angles to left and right from the top of the straight staircase. On the right were two large, bare, dusty rooms, with the wallpaper hanging in strips and the floor littered with scattered plaster. On the left was a single large room in the same derelict condition. Out of it was the bathroom of tragic memory, with the high zinc bath still in position. Great splotches of red lay within it, and though they were only rust stains, they seemed to be terrible reminders from the past. Malone was surprised to see the clergyman stagger and support himself against the door. His face was ghastly white and there was moisture on his brow. His two comrades supported him down the stairs, and he sat for a little, as one exhausted, before he spoke.

"Did you two really feel nothing?" he asked. "The fact is that I am mediumistic myself and very open to psychic impressions. This particular one was horrible beyond description."

"What did you get, padre?"

"It is difficult to describe these things. It was a sinking of my heart, a feeling of utter desolation. All my senses were affected. My eyes went dim. I smelt a terrible odour of putrescence. The strength seemed to be sapped out of me. Believe me, Lord John, it is no light thing which we are facing to-night."

The sportsman was unusually grave. "So I begin to think," said he. "Do you think you are fit for the job?"

"I am sorry to have been so weak," Mr. Mason answered. "I shall certainly see the thing through. The worse the case the more need for my help. I am all right now," he added, with his cheery laugh, drawing an old charred briar from his pocket. "This is the best doctor for shaken nerves. I'll sit here and smoke till I'm wanted."

"What shape do you expect it to take?" asked Malone of Roxton.

"Well, it is something you can see. That's certain."

"That's what I cannot understand, in spite of all my reading," said Malone. "These authorities are all agreed that there is a material basis, and that this material basis is drawn from the human body. Call it ectoplasm or what you like, it is human in origin, is it not?"

"Certainly," Mason answered.

"Well, then, are we to suppose that this Dr. Tremayne builds up his own appearance by drawing stuff from me and you?"

"I think, so far as I understand it, that in most cases a spirit does so. I believe that when the spectator feels that he goes cold, that his hair rises, and the rest of it, he is really conscious of this draft upon his own vitality, which may be enough to make him faint or even to kill him. Perhaps he was drawing on me then."

"Suppose we are not mediumistic? Suppose we give out nothing?"

"There is a very full case that I read lately," Mr. Mason answered. "It was closely observed—reported by Professor Nielsson of Iceland. In that case the evil spirit used to go down to an unfortunate photographer in the town, draw his supplies from him, and then come back and use them. He would openly say, 'Give me time to

get down to So-and-so. Then I will show you what I can do.' He was a most formidable creature, and they had great difficulty in mastering him."

"Strikes me, young fellah, we have taken on a larger contract than we knew," said Lord John. "Well, we've done what we could. The passage is well lit. No one can come at us except down the stair without breaking the worsted. There is nothing more we can do except just to wait."

So they waited. It was a weary time. A carriage clock had been placed on the discoloured wooden mantelpiece, and slowly its hands crept on from one to two and from two to three. Outside an owl was hooting most dismally in the darkness. The villa was on a by-road, and there was no human sound to link them up with life. The padre lay dozing in his chair. Malone smoked incessantly. Roxton turned over the pages of a magazine. There were the occasional strange tappings and creakings which come in the silence of the night. Nothing else until——

Someone came down the stair.

There could not be a doubt of it. It was a furtive and yet a clear footstep. Creak! Creak! Creak! Then it had reached the level. Then it had reached their door. They were all sitting erect in their chairs, Roxton grasping his automatic. Had it come in? The door was ajar, but had not farther opened. Yet all were aware of a sense that they were not alone, that they were being observed. It seemed suddenly colder, and Malone was shivering. An instant later the steps were retreating. They were low and swift—much swifter than before. One could imagine that a messenger was speeding back with intelligence to some great master who lurked in the shadows above.

The three sat in silence, looking at each other.

"By Jove!" said Lord John, at last. His face was pale but firm. Malone scribbled some notes and the hour. The clergyman was praying.

"Well, we are up against it," said Roxton, after a pause. "We can't leave it at that. We have to go through with it. I don't mind tellin' you, padre, that I've followed a wounded tiger in thick jungle and never had quite the feelin' I've got now. If I'm out for sensations, I've got them. But I'm going upstairs."

"We will go, too," cried his comrades, rising from their chairs.

"Stay here, young fellah! And you, too, padre. Three of us make too much noise. I'll call you if I want you. My idea is just to steal out and wait quiet on the stair. If that thing, whatever it was, comes again, it will have to pass me."

ALL three went into the passage. The two candles were throwing out little circles of light, and the stair was dimly illuminated, with heavy shadows at the top. Roxton sat down half-way up the stair, pistol in hand. He put his finger to his lips and impatiently waved his companions back to the room. Then they sat by the fire, waiting, waiting.

Half an hour, three-quarters—and then, suddenly it came. There was a sound as of rushing feet, the reverberation of a shot, a scuffle and a heavy fall, with a loud cry for help. Shaking with horror, they rushed into the hall. Lord John was lying on his face amid a litter of plaster and rubbish. He seemed half-dazed as they raised him, and was bleeding where the skin had been grazed from his cheek and hands. Looking up the stair, it seemed that the shadows were blacker and thicker at the top.

"I'm all right," said Roxton, as they led him to his chair. "Just give me a minute to get my wind and I'll have another round with the devil—for if this is not the Devil, then none ever walked the earth."

"You sha'n't go alone this time," said Malone.

"You never should," added the clergyman. "But tell us what happened."

"I hardly know myself. I sat, as you saw, with my back to the top landing. Suddenly I heard a rush. I was aware of something dark right on the top of me. I half turned and fired. The next instant I was chucked down as if I had been a baby. All that plaster came showering down after me. That's as much as I can tell you."

"Why should we go farther in the matter?" said Malone. "You are convinced that this is more than human, are you not?"

"There is no doubt of that."

"Well, then, you have had your experience. What more can you want?"

"Well, I, at least, want something more," said Mr. Mason. "I think our help is needed."

"Strikes me that we shall need the help," said Lord John, rubbing his knee. "We shall want a doctor before we get through. But I'm with you, padre. I feel that we must see it through. If you don't like it, young fellah——"

The mere suggestion was too much for Malone's Irish blood.

"I am going up alone!" he cried, making for the door.

"No, indeed. I am with you." The clergyman hurried after him.

"And you don't go without me!" cried Roxton, limping in the rear.

They stood together in the candle-lit, shadow-draped passage. Malone had his

hand on the balustrade and his foot on the lower step when it happened.

What was it? They could not tell themselves. They only knew that the black shadows at the top of the staircase had thickened, had coalesced, had taken a definite bat-like shape. Great God! They were moving! They were rushing swiftly and noiselessly downwards! Black, black as night, huge, ill-defined, semi-human, and altogether evil and damnable. All three men screamed and blundered for the door. Lord Roxton caught the handle and threw it open. It was too late, the thing was upon them. They were conscious of a warm, glutinous contact, of a purulent smell, of a half-formed, dreadful face and of entwining limbs. An instant later all three were lying half-dazed and horrified, hurled outwards on to the gravel of the drive. The door had shut with a crash.

Malone whimpered and Roxton swore, but the clergyman was silent as they gathered themselves together, each of them badly shaken and bruised, but with an inward horror which made all bodily ill seem insignificant. There they stood in a little group in the light of the sinking moon, their eyes turned upon the black square of the door.

"That's enough," said Roxton, at last.

"More than enough," said Malone. "I wouldn't enter that house again for anything Fleet Street could offer."

"Are you hurt?"

"Defiled, degraded—oh, it was loathsome!"

"Foul!" said Roxton. "Foul! Did you get the reek of it? And the purulent warmth?"

Malone gave a cry of disgust. "Featureless—save for the dreadful eyes! Semi-materialized! Horrible!"

"What about the lights?"

"Oh, damn the lights! Let them burn. I am not going in again!"

"Well, Belchamber can come in the morning. Maybe he is waiting for us now at the inn."

"Yes, let us go to the inn. Let us get back to humanity."

Malone and Roxton turned away, but the clergyman stood fast. He had drawn a crucifix from his pocket.

"You can go," he said. "I am going back."

"What! Into the house?"

"Yes, into the house."

"Padre, this is madness! It will break your neck. We were all like stuffed dolls in its clutch."

"Well, let it break my neck. I am going."

"You are not! Here, Malone, catch hold of him!"

But it was too late. With a few quick steps Mr. Mason had reached the door, flung it open, passed in, and closed it behind him. As his comrades tried to follow they heard a creaking clang upon the farther side. The padre had bolted them out. There was a great slit where the letter-box had been. Through it Roxton entreated him to return.

"Stay there!" said the quick, stern voice of the clergyman. "I have my work to do. I will come when it is done."

A MOMENT later he began to speak. His sweet, homely, affectionate accents rang through the hall. They could only hear snatches outside, bits of prayer, bits of exhortation, bits of kindly greeting. Looking through the narrow opening, Malone could see the straight, dark figure in the candle-light, its back to the door, its face to the shadows of the stair, the crucifix held aloft in his right hand.

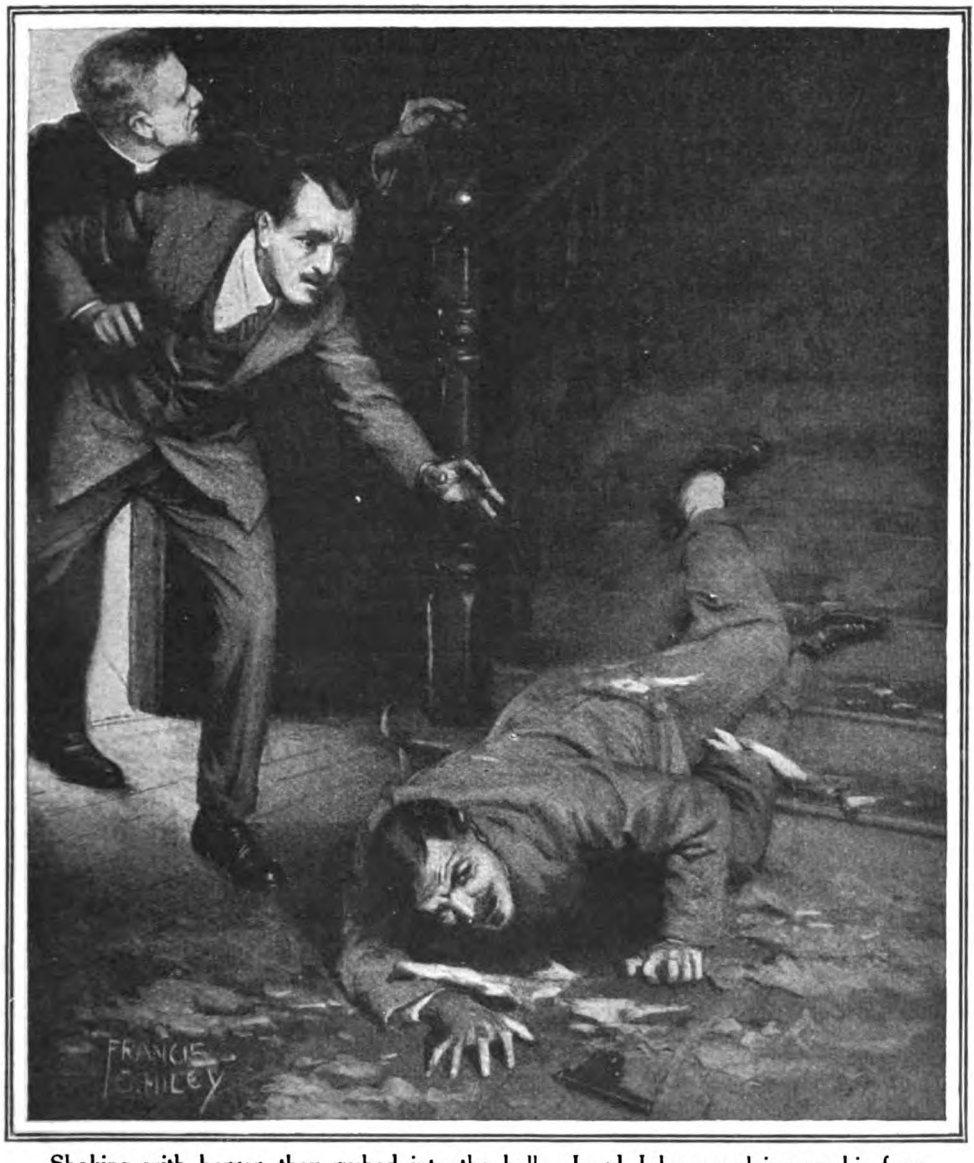
His voice sank into silence and then there came one more of the miracles of this eventful night. A voice answered him. It was such a sound as neither of the auditors had heard before—a guttural, rasping, croaking utterance, indescribably menacing. What it said was short, but it was instantly answered by the clergyman, his tone sharpened to a fine edge by emotion. His utterance seemed to be exhortation, and was at once answered by the ominous voice from beyond. Again and again, and yet again, came the speech and the answer, sometimes shorter, sometimes longer, varying in every key of pleading, arguing, praying, soothing, and everything save upbraiding. Chilled to the marrow, Roxton and Malone crouched by the door, catching snatches of that inconceivable dialogue. Then, after what seemed a weary time, though it was less than an hour, Mr. Mason, in a loud, full, exultant tone, repeated the "Our Father." Was it fancy or echo, or was there really some accompanying voice in the darkness beyond him? A moment later the light went out in the left-hand window, the bolt was drawn, and the clergyman emerged carrying Lord John's bag. His face looked ghastly in the moonlight, but his manner was brisk and happy.

"I think you will find everything here," he said, handing over the bag.

Roxton and Malone took him by either arm and hurried him down to the road.

"By Jove! You don't give us the slip again!" cried Lord John. "Padre, you should have a row of Victoria Crosses."

"No, no, it was my duty. Poor fellow,



Shaking with horror, they rushed into the hall. Lord John was lying on his face amid a litter of plaster and rubbish.

he needed help so badly. I am but a fellow-sinner and yet I was able to give it."

"You did him good?"

"I humbly hope so. I was but the instrument of the higher forces. The house is haunted no longer. He promised. But I will not speak of it now. It may be easier in days to come."

The landlord and the maids stared at the three adventurers in amazement when, in the chill light of the winter dawn, they presented themselves at the inn once more. Each of them seemed to have aged five years in the night. Mr. Mason, with the reaction upon him, threw himself down upon the horsehair sofa in the humble coffee-room and was instantly asleep.

"Poor chap! He looks pretty bad!" said Malone. Indeed, his white, haggard face and long, limp limbs might have been those of a corpse.

"We will get a cup of hot tea into him," Lord John answered, warming his hands at

the fire, which the maid had just lit. "By Jove! We shall be none the worse for some ourselves. Well, young fellah, we've got what we came for. I've had my sensation and you've had your copy."

"And he has had the saving of a soul. Well, we must admit that our objects seem very humble compared to his."

THEY caught the early train to London and had a carriage to themselves. Mason had said little and seemed to be lost in thought. Suddenly he turned to his companions.

"I say, you two, would you mind joining me in prayer?"

Lord John made a grimace. "I warn you, padre, I am rather out of practice."

"Please kneel down with me. I want your aid."

They knelt down, side by side, the padre in the middle. Malone made a mental note of the prayer.

"Father, we are all Your children, poor, weak, helpless creatures, swayed by Fate and circumstance. I implore You that You will turn eyes of compassion upon the man, Rupert Tremayne, who wandered far from You, and is now in the dark. He has sunk deep, very deep, for he had a proud heart, which would not soften, and a cruel mind, which was filled with hate. But now he would turn to the light, and so I beg help for him and for the woman, Emma, who, for the love of him, has gone down into the darkness. May she raise him, as she had tried to do. May they both break the bonds of evil memory which tie them to earth. May they, from to-night, move up towards that glorious light which sooner or later shines upon even the lowest."

They rose from their knees.

"That's better!" cried the padre, thumping his chest with his bony hand, and breaking out into his expansive, toothsome grin. "What a night! Good Lord, what a night!"

Lest the incidents narrated should seem fantastic, it may be well to state that they, like every other episode in this narrative, are drawn very closely from actual life.—A. C. D.

(*To be continued.*)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 147.

(*The Third of the Series.*)

WILLOW the king in many hearts
No more holds sway.
Blue, red, black, yellow, all too soon
Have had their day.
Football will reign, and when he comes,
He means to stay.

1. Who thinks of brandy also thinks
Of town in France.

2. A jolly flag recalls a knight
And country dance.

3. Unknown, disguised; and yet, of course,
Known is the word.

4. Of group or gang we must reject
The final third.

5. He fell, and Freedom shrieked. The last
Three letters go.

6. Thus treat the coin, the very best
You then will know.

7. Whole makes a part (which may recall
A poem), and,
Getting a larger part, has got
To Switzerland.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 147 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on October 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

Tunis provides a satisfactory answer for the seventh light of No. 144. None of the other suggestions for any of the lights of this acrostic are good enough for acceptance.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 146.

1. G	ri	T
2. I	nnovato	R
3. B	oadice	A
4. R	ebuf	F
5. A	talant	A
6. L	etha	L
7. T	on	G
8. A	rmad	A
9. R	espirato	R

TWENTY-NINTH SERIES: RESULT.

Three solvers answered all the four acrostics correctly: Cactus, Enos, and Peci will receive prizes of a guinea and a half each, and must be ineligible in the thirtieth series, now running. Eighteen competitors missed one light only; three of them—Sant, Whal, and Zuz—did not send their names and addresses, as was required by the printed rules: the other fifteen share the rest of the prize-money. Beggar, Bom, Caliban, Corisande, Cumbrae, Ilex, Initio, Jeff, Junius, Lapin, Mancu, Nan, Reg, Slugo, and Wals will receive half a guinea each.

Cactus is Mr. C. W. Brookbank, 15, Elliott Road, Bedford Park, W.4; Enos is Mr. W. S. Cool, 10, Whitehall Place, S.W.1; Peci is Mr. G. E. Matthews, 53, Stockwell Green, S.W.9; Beggar is Mr. B. G. Pearce, 5, Ethelbert Road, Bromley, Kent; Bom is Mr. G. F. Page, 10, Water Street, Newcastle, Staffs; Caliban is Mr. D. F. Ferguson, Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; Corisande is Mrs. Bridges, 7, Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol; Cumbrae is Mr. J. C. Blue, 5, Newlands Drive, Partick, Glasgow; Ilex is Sir H. Holmwood, 21, Courtfield Road, S.W.7; Initio is Mr. C. W. Roberts, 18, Highwood Avenue, London, N.12; Jeff is Mr. G. Jefferson, Cruckeen, Ashlyns Road, Berkhamsted, Herts; Junius is Mr. F. C. W. Grigson, Amesbury, Hindhead; Lapin is Miss L. A. Peile, 7, Cosway St., London, N.W.1; Mancu is Mr. L. A. Jones, Asterley, Goldsmid Road, Tonbridge, Kent; Nan is Mrs. E. E. Samman, Derbyhaven House, near Castletown, Isle of Man; Reg is Mr. H. Lees, 3, Campden House Chambers, W.8; Slugo is Mr. J. J. Holloway, Lyndale, Howard Road, New Malden, Surrey; Wals is Mr. W. Stradling, 3, Charlbury Road, Oxford.

HIGH STAKES

by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

THE summer day was drawing to a close. Over the terrace outside the club-house the chestnut trees threw long shadows, and such bees as still lingered in the flower-beds had the air of tired business men who are about ready to shut up the office and go off to dinner and a musical comedy. The Oldest Member, stirring in his favourite chair, glanced at his watch and yawned.

As he did so, from the neighbourhood of the eighteenth green, hidden from his view by the slope of the ground, there came suddenly a medley of shrill animal cries, and he deduced that some belated match must just have reached a finish. His surmise was correct. The babble of voices drew nearer, and over the brow of the hill came a little group of men. Two, who appeared to be the ringleaders in the affair, were short and stout. One was cheerful, the other dejected. The rest of the company consisted of friends and adherents; and one of these, a young man who seemed to be amused, strolled to where the Oldest Member sat.

"What," inquired the Sage, "was all the shouting for?" The young man sank into a chair and lighted a cigarette.

"Perkins and Broster," he said, "were all square at the seventeenth, and they raised the stakes to fifty pounds. They were both on the green in seven, and Perkins had a two-foot putt to halve the match. He missed it by six inches. They play pretty high, those two."

"It is a curious thing," said the Oldest Member, "that men whose golf is of a kind that makes hardened caddies wince always do. The more competent a player, the smaller the stake that contents him. It is only when you get down into the submerged tenth of the golfing world that you find the big gambling. However, I would not call fifty pounds anything sensational in the case of two men like Perkins and Broster. They are both well provided with the world's goods. If you would care to hear the story——"

The young man's jaw fell a couple of notches.

"I had no idea it was so late," he bleated. "I ought to be——"

"——of a man who played for really high stakes——"

"I promised to——"

"——I will tell it to you," said the Sage, affectionately attaching himself to the other's buttonhole.

"Look here," said the young man, sullenly, "it isn't one of those stories about two men who fall in love with the same girl and play a match to decide which is to marry her, is it? Because, if so——"

"The stake to which I allude," said the Oldest Member, "was something far higher and bigger than a woman's love. Shall I proceed?"

"All right," said the young man, resignedly. "Snap into it."

IT has been well said—I think by the man who wrote the sub-titles for "Cage-Birds of Society" (began the Oldest Member)—that wealth does not always bring happiness. It was so with Bradbury Fisher, the hero of the story which I am about to relate. One of America's most prominent tainted millionaires, he had two sorrows in life—his handicap refused to stir from twenty-four and his wife disapproved of his collection of famous golf relics. Once,

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finding him crooning over the trousers in which Ouimet had won his historic replay against Vardon and Ray in the American Open, she had asked him why he did not collect something worth while like Old Masters or first editions.

Worth while! Bradbury had forgiven, for he loved the woman, but he could not forget.

For Bradbury Fisher, like so many men who have taken to the game in middle age, after a youth misspent in the pursuits of commerce, was no half-hearted enthusiast. Although he still occasionally descended on Wall Street in order to pry the small investor loose from another couple of million, what he really lived for now was golf and his collection. He had begun the collection in his first year as a golfer, and he prized it dearly. And when he reflected that his wife had stopped him purchasing J. H. Taylor's shirt-stud, which he could have had for a few hundred pounds, the iron seemed to enter into his soul.

The distressing episode had occurred in London, and he was now on his way back to New York, having left his wife to continue her holiday in England. All through the voyage he remained moody and distrait; and at the ship's concert, at which he was forced to take the chair, he was heard to observe to the purser that if the alleged soprano who had just sung "My Little Grey Home in the West" had the immortal gall to take a second encore he hoped that she would trip over a high note and dislocate her neck.

SUCH was Bradbury Fisher's mood throughout the ocean journey, and it remained constant until he arrived at his palatial home at Goldenville, Long Island, where, as he sat smoking a moody after-dinner cigar in the Versailles drawing-room, Blizzard, his English butler, informed him that Mr. Gladstone Bott desired to speak to him on the telephone.

"Tell him to go and boil himself," said Bradbury.

"Very good, sir."

"No, I'll tell him myself," said Bradbury. He strode to the telephone. "Hullo!" he said, curtly.

He was not fond of this Bott. There are certain men who seem fated to go through life as rivals. It was so with Bradbury Fisher and J. Gladstone Bott. Born in the same town within a few days of one another, they had come to New York in the same week; and from that moment their careers had run side by side. Fisher had made his first million two days before Bott, but Bott's first divorce had got half a column and two sticks more publicity than Fisher's.

At Sing-Sing, where each had spent several happy years of early manhood, they had run neck and neck for the prizes which that institution has to offer. Fisher secured the position of catcher on the baseball nine in preference to Bott, but Bott just nosed Fisher out when it came to the choice of a tenor for the glee club. Bott was selected for the debating contest against Auburn, but Fisher got the last place on the cross-word puzzle team, with Bott merely first reserve.

They had taken up golf simultaneously, and their handicaps had remained level ever since. Between such men it is not surprising that there was little love lost.

"Hullo!" said Gladstone Bott. "So you're back? Say, listen, Fisher. I think I've got something that'll interest you. Something you'll be glad to have in your golf collection."

Bradbury Fisher's mood softened. He disliked Bott, but that was no reason for not doing business with him. And though he had little faith in the man's judgment, it might be that he had stumbled upon some valuable antique. There crossed his mind the comforting thought that his wife was three thousand miles away and that he was no longer under her penetrating eye—that eye which, so to speak, was always "about his bath and about his bed and spying out all his ways."

"I've just returned from a trip down South," proceeded Bott, "and I have secured the authentic baffy used by Bobbie Jones in his first important contest—the Infants' All-In Championship of Atlanta, Georgia, open to those of both sexes not yet having finished teething."

Bradbury gasped. He had heard rumours that this treasure was in existence, but he had never credited them.

"You're sure?" he cried. "You're positive it's genuine?"

"I have a written guarantee from Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, and the nurse."

"How much, Bott, old man?" stammered Bradbury. "How much do you want for it, Gladstone, old top? I'll give you a hundred thousand dollars."

"Ha!"

"Five hundred thousand."

"Ha, ha!"

"A million."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Two million."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Bradbury Fisher's strong face twisted like that of a tortured fiend. He registered in quick succession rage, despair, hate, fury, anguish, pique, and resentment. But when he spoke again his voice was soft and gentle.

" Gladdy, old socks," he said, " we have been friends for years."

" No, we haven't," said Gladstone Bott.

" Yes, we have."

" No, we haven't."

" Well, anyway, what about two million five hundred ? "

" Nothing doing. Say, listen. Do you really want that baffy ? "

" I do, Botty, old egg, I do indeed."

" Then listen. I'll exchange it for Blizzard."

" For Blizzard ? " quavered Fisher.

" For Blizzard."

It occurs to me that, when describing the closeness of the rivalry between these two men, I may have conveyed the impression that in no department of life could either claim a definite advantage over the other. If that is so, I erred. It is true that in a general way, whatever one had, the other had something equally good to counterbalance it ; but in just one matter Bradbury Fisher had triumphed completely over Gladstone Bott. Bradbury Fisher had the finest English butler on Long Island.

Blizzard stood alone. There is a regrettable tendency on the part of English butlers to-day to deviate more and more from the type which made their species famous. The modern butler has a nasty knack of being a lissom young man in perfect condition who looks like the son of the house. But Blizzard was of the fine old school. Before coming to the Fisher home he had been for fifteen years in the service of an earl, and his appearance suggested that throughout those fifteen years he had not let a day pass without its pint of port. He radiated port and pop-eyed dignity. He had splay feet and three chins, and when he walked his curving waistcoat preceded him like the advance guard of some royal procession.

From the first, Bradbury had been perfectly aware that Bott coveted Blizzard, and the knowledge had sweetened his life. But this was the first time he had come out into the open and admitted it.

" Blizzard ? " whispered Fisher.

" Blizzard," said Bott, firmly. " It's my wife's birthday next week, and I've been wondering what to give her."

Bradbury Fisher shuddered from head to foot, and his legs wobbled like asparagus stalks. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. The serpent was tempting him—tempting him grievously.

" You're sure you won't take three million—or four—or something like that ? "

" No ; I want Blizzard."

Bradbury Fisher passed his handkerchief over his streaming brow.

" So be it," he said in a low voice.

Blizzard was of the fine old school of butlers.

The Jones baffy arrived that night, and for some hours Bradbury Fisher gloated over it with the unmixed joy of a collector who has secured the prize of a lifetime. Then, stealing gradually over him, came the realization of what he had done.

He was thinking of his wife and what she would say when she heard of this. Blizzard was Mrs. Fisher's pride and joy. She had never, like the poet, nursed a dear gazelle, but, had she done so, her attitude towards it would have been identical with her attitude towards Blizzard. Although so far away, it was plain that her thoughts still lingered with the treasure she had left at home, for on his arrival Bradbury had found three cables awaiting him.

The first ran :—

" How is Blizzard ? Reply."

The second :—

" How is Blizzard's sciatica ? Reply."

The third :—

" Blizzard's hiccups. How are they ? Suggest Doctor Murphy's Tonic Swamp-Juice. Highly spoken of. Three times a

day after meals. Try for week and cable result."

It did not require a clairvoyant to tell Bradbury that, if on her return she found that he had disposed of Blizzard in exchange for a child's cut-down baffy, she would certainly sue him for divorce. And there was not a jury in America that would not give their verdict in her favour without a dissentient voice. His first wife, he recalled, had divorced him on far flimsier grounds. So had his second, third, and fourth. And Bradbury loved his wife. There had been a time in his life when, if he lost a wife, he had felt philosophically that there would be another along in a minute; but, as a man grows older, he tends to become set in his habits, and he could not contemplate existence without the company of the present incumbent.

What, therefore, to do? What, when you came right down to it, to do?

There seemed no way out of the dilemma. If he kept the Jones baffy, no other price would satisfy Bott's jealous greed. And to part with the baffy, now that it was actually in his possession, was unthinkable.

And then, in the small hours of the morning, as he tossed sleeplessly on his Louis Quinze bed, his giant brain conceived a plan.

ON the following afternoon he made his way to the club-house, and was informed that Bott was out playing a round with another millionaire of his acquaintance. Bradbury waited, and presently his rival appeared.

"Hey!" said Gladstone Bott, in his abrupt, uncouth way. "When are you going to deliver that butler?"

"I will make the shipment at the earliest date," said Bradbury.

"I was expecting him last night."

"You shall have him shortly."

"What do you feed him on?" asked Gladstone Bott.

"Oh, anything you have yourselves. Put sulphur in his port in the hot weather. Tell me, how did your match go?"

"He beat me. I had rotten luck."

Bradbury Fisher's eyes gleamed. His moment had come.

"Luck?" he said. "What do you mean, luck? Luck has nothing to do with it. You're always beefing about your luck. The trouble with you is that you play rottenly."

"What?"

"It is no use trying to play golf unless you learn the first principles and do it properly. Look at the way you drive."

"What's wrong with my driving?"

"Nothing, except that you don't do anything right. In driving, as the club comes back in the swing, the weight should be shifted by degrees, quietly and gradually, until, when the club has reached its top-most point, the whole weight of the body is supported by the right leg, the left foot being turned at the time and the left knee bent in toward the right leg. But, regardless of how much you perfect your style, you cannot develop any method which will not require you to keep your head still so that you can see your ball clearly."

"Hey!"

"It is obvious that it is impossible to introduce a jerk or a sudden violent effort into any part of the swing without disturbing the balance or moving the head. I want to drive home the fact that it is absolutely essential to——

"Hey!" cried Gladstone Bott.

The man was shaken to the core. From the local pro, and from scratch men of his acquaintance, he would gladly have listened to this sort of thing by the hour, but to hear these words from Bradbury Fisher, whose handicap was the same as his own and out of whom it was his unperishable conviction that he could hammer the tar any time he got him out on the links, was too much.

"Where do you get off," he demanded, heatedly, "trying to teach me golf?"

Bradbury Fisher chuckled to himself. Everything was working out as his subtle mind had foreseen.

"My dear fellow," he said, "I was only speaking for your good."

"I like your nerve! I can lick you any time we start."

"It's easy enough to talk."

"I trimmed you twice the week before you sailed to England."

"Naturally," said Bradbury Fisher, "in a friendly round, with only a few thousand dollars on the match, a man does not extend himself. You wouldn't dare to play me for anything that really mattered."

"I'll play you when you like for anything you like."

"Very well. I'll play you for Blizzard."

"Against what?"

"Oh, anything you please. How about a couple of railroads?"

"Make it three."

"Very well."

"Next Friday suit you?"

"Sure," said Bradbury Fisher.

It seemed to him that his troubles were over. Like all twenty-four handicap men, he had the most perfect confidence in his ability to beat all other twenty-four handicap men. As for Gladstone Bott, he knew that he could disembowel him any time he was able to lure him out of the club-house.

"Luck?" he said. "What do you mean, luck? Luck has nothing to do with it. The trouble with you is that you play rottenly."

NEVERTHELESS, as he breakfasted on the morning of the fateful match, Bradbury Fisher was conscious of an unwonted nervousness. He was no weakling. In Wall Street his phlegm in moments of stress was a byword. On the famous occasion when the B. and G. crowd had attacked C. and D., and in order to keep control of L. and M. he had been compelled to buy so largely of S. and T., he had not turned a hair. And yet this morning, in endeavouring to prong up segments of bacon, he twice missed the plate altogether and on a third occasion speared himself in the cheek with his fork. The spectacle of Blizzard, so calm, so competent, so supremely the perfect butler, unnerved him.

"I am jumpy to-day, Blizzard," he said, forcing a laugh.

"Yes, sir. You do, indeed, appear to have the willies."

"Yes. I am playing a very important golf-match this morning."

"Indeed, sir?"

"I must pull myself together, Blizzard."

"Yes, sir. And, if I may respectfully make the suggestion, you should endeavour, when in action, to keep the head down and the eye rigidly upon the ball."

"I will, Blizzard, I will," said Bradbury Fisher, his keen eyes clouding under a sudden mist of tears. "Thank you, Blizzard, for the advice."

"Not at all, sir."

"How is your sciatica, Blizzard?"

"A trifle improved, I thank you, sir."

"And your hiccups?"

"I am conscious of a slight, though possibly only a temporary, relief, sir."

"Good," said Bradbury Fisher.

He left the room with a firm step; and, proceeding to his library, read for awhile portions of that grand chapter in James Braid's "Advanced Golf" which deals with driving into the wind. It was a fair and cloudless morning, but it was as well to be prepared for emergencies. Then, feeling that he had done all that could be done, he ordered the car and was taken to the links.

Gladstone Bott was awaiting him on the first tee, in company with two caddies. A curt greeting, a spin of the coin, and Gladstone Bott, securing the honour, stepped out to begin the contest.

ALTHOUGH there are, of course, endless sub-species in their ranks, not all of which have yet been classified by science, twenty-four handicap golfers may be stated broadly to fall into two classes, the dashing and the cautious—those, that is to say, who endeavour to do every hole in a brilliant one and those who are content to win with a steady nine. Gladstone Bott was one of the cautious brigade. He fussed about for a few moments like a hen scratching gravel, then with a stiff quarter-swing sent his ball straight down the fairway for a matter of seventy yards, and it was Bradbury Fisher's turn to drive.

Now, normally, Bradbury Fisher was essentially a dasher. It was his habit, as a rule, to raise his left foot some six inches from the ground and, having swayed forcefully back on to his right leg, to sway sharply forward again and lash out with sickening violence in the general direction of the ball. It was a method which at times produced excellent results, though it had the flaw that it was somewhat uncertain. Bradbury Fisher was the only member of the club, with the exception of the club champion, who had ever carried the second green with his drive; but, on the other hand, he was also the only member who had ever laid his drive on the eleventh dead to the pin of the sixteenth.

But to-day the magnitude of the issues at stake had wrought a change in him. Planted firmly on both feet, he fiddled at the ball in the manner of one playing spillikens. When he swung, it was with a swing resembling that of Gladstone Bott; and, like Bott, he achieved a nice, steady, rainbow-shaped drive of some seventy yards straight down the middle. Bott replied with an eighty-yard brassy shot. Bradbury held him with another. And so, working their way cautiously across the prairie, they came to the green, where Bradbury, laying his third putt dead, halved the hole.

The second was a repetition of the first, the third and fourth repetitions of the second. But on the fifth green the fortunes of the match began to change. Here Gladstone Bott, faced with a fifteen-foot putt to win, smote his ball firmly off the line, as had been his practice at each of the preceding holes, and the ball, hitting a worm-cast and bounding off to the left, ran on a couple of yards, hit another worm-cast, bounded to the right, and finally, bumping into a twig, leaped to the left again and clattered into the tin.

"One up," said Gladstone Bott. "Tricky, some of these greens are. You have to gauge the angles to a nicety."

At the sixth a donkey in an adjoining field uttered a raucous bray just as Bott was addressing his ball with a mashie-niblick on the edge of the green. He started violently and, jerking his club with a spasmodic reflex action of the forearm, holed out.

"Nice work," said Gladstone Bott.

The seventh was a short hole, guarded by two large bunkers between which ran a narrow footpath of turf. Gladstone Bott's mashie-shot, falling short, ran over the rough, peered for a moment into the depths to the left, then, winding up the path, trickled on to the green, struck a fortunate slope, acquired momentum, ran on, and dropped into the hole.

"Nearly missed it," said Gladstone Bott, drawing a deep breath.

BRADBURY FISHER looked out upon a world that swam and danced before his eyes. He had not been prepared for this sort of thing. The way things were shaping, he felt that it would hardly surprise him now if the cups were to start jumping up and snapping at Bott's ball like starving dogs.

"Three up," said Gladstone Bott.

With a strong effort Bradbury Fisher mastered his feelings. His mouth set grimly. Matters, he perceived, had reached a crisis. He saw now that he had made a mistake in allowing himself to be intimidated by the importance of the occasion into being scientific. Nature had never intended him for a scientific golfer, and up till now he had been behaving like an animated illustration out of a book by Vardon. He had taken his club back along and near the turf, allowing it to trend around the legs as far as was permitted by the movement of the arms. He had kept his right elbow close to the side, this action coming into operation before the club was allowed to describe a section of a circle in an upward direction, whence it was carried by means of a slow, steady, swinging movement. He had pivoted, he had pronated the wrists, and he had been careful about the lateral hip-shift.

And it had all been wrong. That sort of stuff might suit some people, but not him. He was a biffer, a swatter, and a slosher; and it flashed upon him now that only by biffing, swatting, and sloshing as he had never biffed, swatted, and sloshed before could he hope to recover the ground he had lost.

Gladstone Bott was not one of those players who grow careless with success. His drive at the eighth was just as steady and short as ever. But this time Bradbury Fisher made no attempt to imitate him. For seven holes he had been checking his natural instincts, and now he drove with all the banked-up fury that comes with release from long suppression.

For an instant he remained poised on one leg like a stork; then there was a whistle and a crack, and the ball, smitten squarely in the midriff, flew down the course and, soaring over the bunkers, hit the turf and gambolled to within twenty yards of the green.

He straightened out the kinks in his spine with a grim smile. Allowing himself the regulation three putts, he would be down in five, and only a miracle could give Gladstone Bott anything better than a seven.

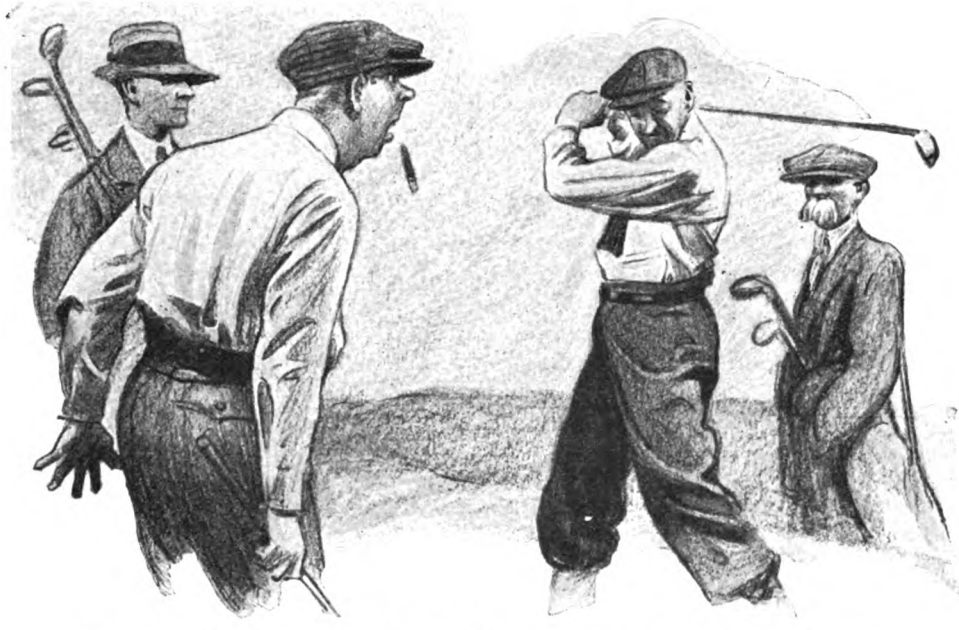
"Two down," he said some minutes later, and Gladstone Bott nodded sullenly.

It was not often that Bradbury Fisher kept on the fairway with two consecutive drives, but strange things were happening to-day. Not only was his drive at the ninth a full two hundred and forty yards, but it was also perfectly straight.

"One down," said Bradbury Fisher, and

The twelfth was another short hole; and Bradbury, unable to curb the fine, careless rapture which had crept into his game, had the misfortune to overshoot the green by some sixty yards, thus enabling his opponent to take the lead once more.

The thirteenth and fourteenth were halved, but Bradbury, driving another long ball, won the fifteenth, squaring the match.



There are few things more demoralizing than to be consistently outdriven.

Bott nodded even more sullenly than before.

There are few things more demoralizing than to be consistently outdriven; and when he is outdriven by a hundred and seventy yards at two consecutive holes the bravest man is apt to be shaken. Gladstone Bott was only human. It was with a sinking heart that he watched his opponent heave and sway on the tenth tee; and when the ball once more flew straight and far down the course a strange weakness seemed to come over him. For the first time he lost his morale and topped. The ball trickled into the long grass, and after three fruitless stabs at it with a niblick he picked up, and the match was squared.

At the eleventh Bradbury Fisher also topped, and his tee-shot, though nice and straight, travelled only a couple of feet. He had to scramble to halve in eight.

IT seemed to Bradbury Fisher, as he took his stand on the sixteenth tee, that he now had the situation well in hand. At the thirteenth and fourteenth his drive had flickered, but on the fifteenth it had come back in all its glorious vigour and there appeared to be no reason to suppose that it had not come to stay. He recollected exactly how he had done that last colossal slosh, and he now prepared to reproduce the movements precisely as before. The great thing to remember was to hold the breath on the back-swing and not to release it before the moment of impact. Also, the eyes should not be closed until late in the down-swing. All great golfers have their little secrets, and that was Bradbury's.

With these aids to success firmly fixed in his mind, Bradbury Fisher prepared to give the ball the nastiest bang that a golf-ball had ever had since Edward Blackwell was

in his prime. He drew in his breath and, with lungs expanded to their fullest capacity heaved back on to his large, flat right foot. Then, clenching his teeth, he lashed out.

When he opened his eyes, they fell upon a horrid spectacle. Either he had closed those eyes too soon or else he had breathed too precipitately—whatever the cause, the ball, which should have gone due south, was travelling with great speed sou'-sou'-east. And, even as he gazed, it curved to earth and fell into as uninviting a bit of rough as he had ever penetrated. And he was a man who had spent much time in many roughs.

LEAVING Gladstone Bott to continue his imitation of a spavined octogenarian rolling peanuts with a toothpick, Bradbury Fisher, followed by his caddie, set out on the long trail into the jungle.

Hope did not altogether desert him as he walked. In spite of its erratic direction, the ball had been so shrewdly smitten that it was not far from the green. Provided luck was with him and the lie not too desperate, a mashie would put him on the carpet. It was only when he reached the rough and saw what had happened that his heart sank. There the ball lay, half hidden in the grass, while above it waved the straggling tentacle of some tough-looking shrub. Behind it was a stone, and behind the stone, at just the elevation required to catch the back-swing of the club, was a tree. And, by an ironical stroke of fate which drew from Bradbury a hollow, bitter laugh, only a few feet to the right was a beautiful, smooth piece of turf from which it would have been a pleasure to play one's second.

Dully Bradbury looked round to see how Bott was getting on. And then suddenly, as he found that Bott was completely invisible behind the belt of bushes through which he had just passed, a voice seemed to whisper to him, "Why not?"

Bradbury Fisher, remember, had spent thirty years in Wall Street.

It was at this moment that he realized that he was not alone. His caddie was standing at his side.

Bradbury Fisher gazed upon the caddie, whom until now he had not had any occasion to observe with any closeness.

The caddie was not a boy. He was a man, apparently in the middle forties, with bushy eyebrows and a walrus moustache; and there was something about his appearance which suggested to Bradbury that here was a kindred spirit. He reminded Bradbury a little of Spike Huggins, the safe-blower, who had been a member of his frat at Sing-Sing. It seemed to him that this caddie could be trusted in a delicate matter involving secrecy and silence. Had he been some babbling urchin, the risk might have been too great.

"Caddie," said Bradbury.

"Sir?" said the caddie.

"Yours is an ill-paid job," said Bradbury.

"It is, indeed, sir," said the caddie.

"Would you like to earn fifty dollars?"

"I would prefer to earn a hundred."

"I meant a hundred," said Bradbury.

He produced a roll of bills from his pocket, and peeled off one of that value. Then, stooping, he picked up his ball and placed it on the little oasis of turf. The caddie bowed intelligently.

"You mean to say," cried Gladstone Bott, a few moments later, "that you were out with your second? With your second!"

"I had a stroke of luck."

"You're sure it wasn't about six strokes of luck?"

"My ball was right out in the open in an excellent lie."

"Oh!" said Gladstone Bott, shortly.

"I have four for it, I think."

"One down," said Gladstone Bott.

"And two to play," trilled Bradbury.

It was with a light heart that Bradbury Fisher teed up on the seventeenth. The match, he felt, was as good as over. The whole essence of golf is to discover a way of getting out of rough without losing strokes; and with this sensible, broad-minded man of the world caddying for him he seemed to have discovered the ideal way. It cost him scarcely a pang when he saw his drive slice away into a tangle of long grass, but for the sake of appearances he affected a little chagrin.

"Tut, tut!" he said.

"I shouldn't worry," said Gladstone Bott. "You will probably find it sitting up on an indiarubber tee which someone has dropped there."

He spoke sardonically, and Bradbury did not like his manner. But then he never had liked Gladstone Bott's manner, so what of that? He made his way to where the ball had fallen. It was lying under a bush.

"Caddie," said Bradbury.

"Sir?" said the caddie.

"A hundred?"

"And fifty."

"And fifty," said Bradbury Fisher.

Gladstone Bott was still toiling along the fairway when Bradbury reached the green.

"How many?" he asked, eventually winning to the goal.

"On in two," said Bradbury. "And you?"

"Playing seven."

"Then let me see. If you take two putts, which is most unlikely, I shall have six for the hole and match."

A minute later Bradbury had picked his ball out of the cup. He stood there, basking in the sunshine, his heart glowing with quiet happiness. It seemed to him that he had never seen the countryside looking so beautiful. The birds appeared to be singing as they had never sung before. The trees and the rolling turf had taken on a charm beyond anything he had ever encountered. Even Gladstone Bott looked almost bearable.

"A very pleasant match," he said, cordially, "conducted throughout in the most sporting spirit. At one time I thought you were going to pull it off, old man, but there—class will tell."

"I will now make my report," said the caddie with the walrus moustache.

"Do so," said Gladstone Bott, briefly.

"Caddie, would you like to earn fifty dollars?"
"I would prefer to earn a hundred."
"I meant a hundred," said Bradbury.

Bradbury Fisher stared at the man with blanched cheeks. The sun had ceased to shine, the birds had stopped singing. The trees and the rolling turf looked pretty rotten, and Gladstone Bott perfectly foul. His heart was leaden with a hideous dread.

"Your report? Your—your report? What do you mean?"

"You don't suppose," said Gladstone Bott, "that I would play you an important match unless I had detectives watching you, do you? This gentleman is from the Quick Results Agency. What have you to report?" he said, turning to the caddie.

The caddie removed his bushy eyebrows, and with a quick gesture swept off his moustache.

"On the twelfth inst.," he began in a monotonous, sing-song voice, "acting upon instructions received, I made my way to the Goldenville Golf Links in order to observe the movements of the man Fisher. I had adopted for the occasion the Number Three disguise and——"

"All right, all right," said Gladstone Bott, impatiently. "You can skip all that. Come down to what happened at the sixteenth."

The caddie looked wounded, but he bowed deferentially.

"At the sixteenth hole the man Fisher moved his ball into what—from his actions and furtive manner—I deduced to be a more favourable position."

"Ah!" said Gladstone Bott.

"On the seventeenth the man Fisher picked up his ball and threw it with a movement of the wrist on to the green."

"It's a lie. A foul and contemptible lie," shouted Bradbury Fisher.

"Realizing that the man Fisher might adopt this attitude, sir," said the caddie, "I took the precaution of snapshotting him in the act with my miniature wrist-watch camera, the detective's best friend."

Bradbury Fisher covered his face with his hands and uttered a hollow groan.

"My match," said Gladstone Bott, with vindictive triumph. "I'll trouble you to deliver that butler to me f.o.b. at my residence not later than noon to-morrow. Oh, yes, and I was forgetting. You owe me three railroads."

BLIZZARD, dignified but kindly, met Bradbury in the Byzantine hall on his return home.

"I trust your golf-match terminated satisfactorily, sir?" said the butler.

A pang, almost too poignant to be borne, shot through Bradbury.

"No, Blizzard," he said. "No. Thank you for your kind inquiry, but I was not in luck."

"Too bad, sir," said Blizzard, sympathetically. "I trust the prize at stake was not excessive?"

"Well—er—well, it was rather big. I should like to speak to you about that a little later, Blizzard."

"At any time that is suitable to you, sir. If you will ring for one of the assistant-under-footmen when you desire to see me, sir, he will find me in my pantry. Meanwhile, sir, this cable arrived for you a short while back."

Bradbury took the envelope listlessly. He had been expecting a communication from his London agents announcing that they had bought Kent and Sussex, for which he had instructed them to make a firm offer just before he left England. No doubt this was their cable.

He opened the envelope, and started as if it had contained a scorpion. It was from his wife.

"Returning immediately 'Aquitania.'" (it ran). "Docking Friday night. Meet without fail."

Bradbury stared at the words, frozen to the marrow. Although he had been in a sort of trance ever since that dreadful moment on the seventeenth green, his great brain had not altogether ceased to function; and, while driving home in the car, he had sketched out roughly a plan of action which, he felt, might meet the crisis. Assuming that Mrs. Fisher was to remain abroad for another month, he had practically decided to buy a daily paper, insert in it a front-page story announcing the death of Blizzard, forward the clipping to his wife, and then sell his house and move to another neighbourhood. In this way it might be that she would never learn of what had occurred.

But if she was due back next Friday, the scheme fell through and exposure was inevitable.

He wondered dully what had caused her change of plans, and came to the conclusion that some feminine sixth sense must have warned her of peril threatening Blizzard. With a good deal of peevishness he wished that Providence had never endowed women with this sixth sense. A woman with merely five took quite enough handling.

"Sweet suffering soup-spoons!" groaned Bradbury.

"Sir?" said Blizzard.

"Nothing," said Bradbury.

"Very good, sir," said Blizzard.

FOR a man with anything on his mind, any little trouble calculated to affect the *joie de vivre*, there are few spots less cheering than the Customs sheds of New York. Draughts whistle dismally there—now to, now fro. Strange noises are heard. Customs officials chew gum and lurk grimly in the shadows like tigers awaiting the luncheon-gong. It is not surprising that Bradbury's spirits, low when he reached the place, should have sunk to zero long before the gangplank was lowered and the passengers began to stream down it.

His wife was among the first to land. How beautiful she looked, thought Bradbury, as he watched her. And, alas, how intimidating. His tastes had always lain in the direction of spirited women. His first wife had been spirited. So had his second, third, and fourth. And the one at the moment holding office was perhaps the most spirited of the whole platoon. For one long instant, as he went to meet her, Bradbury Fisher was conscious of a regret that he had not married one of those meek, mild girls who suffer uncomplainingly at their husbands' hands in the more hectic type of feminine novel. What he felt he could have done with at the moment was the sort of wife who thinks herself dashed lucky if the other half of the sketch does not drag her round the billiard-room by her hair, kicking her the while with spiked shoes.

"Bradbury, look! You see that man over there?" Bradbury followed her pointing finger.

Three conversational openings presented themselves to him as he approached her.

"Darling, there is something I want to tell you——"

"Dearest, I have a small confession to make——"

"Sweetheart, I don't know if by any chance you remember Blizzard, our butler. Well, it's like this——"

But, in the event, it was she who spoke first.

"Oh, Bradbury," she cried, rushing into his arms, "I've done the most awful thing, and you must try to forgive me!"

Bradbury blinked. He had never seen her in this strange mood before. As she clung to him, she seemed timid, fluttering, and —although a woman who weighed a full hundred and fifty-seven pounds—almost fragile.

"What is it?" he inquired, tenderly. "Has somebody stolen your jewels?"

"No, no."

"Have you been losing money at bridge?"

"No, no. Worse than that."

Bradbury started.

"You didn't sing 'My Little Grey Home in the West' at the ship's concert?" he demanded, eyeing her closely.

"No, no! Ah, how can I tell you? Bradbury, look! You see that man over there?"

Bradbury followed her pointing finger. Standing in an attitude of negligent dignity beside a pile of trunks under the letter V was a tall, stout, ambassadorial man, at the very sight of whom, even at this distance, Bradbury Fisher felt an odd sense of inferiority. His pendulous cheeks, his curving waistcoat, his protruding eyes, and the sequence of rolling chins combined to produce in Bradbury that instinctive feeling of being in the presence of a superior which we experience when meeting scratch golfers, head-waiters of fashionable restaurants, and traffic-policemen. A sudden pang of suspicion pierced him.

" Well ? " he said, hoarsely. " What of him ? "

" Bradbury, you must not judge me too harshly. We were thrown together and I was tempted——"

" Woman," thundered Bradbury Fisher, " who is this man ? "

" His name is Vosper."

" And what is there between you and him, and when did it start, and why and how and where ? "

Mrs. Fisher dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief.

" It was at the Duke of Bootle's, Bradbury. I was invited there for the week-end."

" And this man was there ? "

" Yes."

" Ha ! Proceed ! "

" The moment I set eyes on him, something seemed to go all over me."

" Indeed ! "

" At first it was his mere appearance. I felt that I had dreamed of such a man all my life, and that for all these wasted years I had been putting up with the second-best."

" Oh, you did, eh ? Really ? Is that so ? You did, did you ? " snorted Bradbury Fisher.

" I couldn't help it, Bradbury. I know I have always seemed so devoted to Blizzard, and so I was. But, honestly, there is no comparison between them—really there isn't. You should see the way Vosper stood behind the Duke's chair. Like a high priest presiding over some mystic religious ceremony. And his voice when he asks you if you will have sherry or hock ! Like the music of some wonderful organ. I couldn't resist him. I approached him delicately, and found that he was willing to come to America. He had been eighteen years with the Duke, and he told me he couldn't stand the sight of the back of his head any longer. So—"

Bradbury Fisher reeled.

" This man—this Vosper. Who is he ? "

" Why, I'm telling you, honey. He was the Duke's butler, and now he's ours. Oh, you know how impulsive I am. Honestly, it wasn't till we were half-way across the Atlantic that I suddenly said to myself, ' What about Blizzard ? ' What am I to do, Bradbury ? I simply haven't the nerve to fire Blizzard. And yet what will happen when he walks into his pantry and finds Vosper there ? Oh, think, Bradbury, think ! "

Bradbury Fisher was thinking—and for the first time in a week without agony.

" Evangeline," he said, gravely, " this is awkward."

" I know."

" Extremely awkward."

" I know, I know. But surely you can think of some way out of the muddle ! "

" I may. I cannot promise, but I may." He pondered deeply. " Ha ! I have it ! It is just possible that I may be able to induce Gladstone Bott to take on Blizzard."

" Do you really think he would ? "

" He may—if I play my cards carefully. At any rate, I will try to persuade him. For the moment you and Vosper had better remain in New York, while I go home and put the negotiations in train. If I am successful, I will let you know."

" Do try your very hardest."

" I think I shall be able to manage it. Gladstone and I are old friends, and he would stretch a point to oblige me. But let this be a lesson to you, Evangeline."

" Oh, I will."

" By the way," said Bradbury Fisher, " I am cabling my London agents to-day to instruct them to buy J. H. Taylor's shirt-stud for my collection."

" Quite right, Bradbury, darling. And anything else you want in that way you will get, won't you ? "

" I will," said Bradbury Fisher.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

No. 9

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

I AM not going to talk about personal measles and mumps so much as about the people and things without which I should have no recollection at all of my youth.

The first thing I remember is waking on a Christmas morning to find beside my bed twelve flat herring-gutted tin soldiers in a box with a glass top, and the next a breakfast table, the sunlight of a summer morning lighting the room, the teapot, a big Cork ham, and the family Bible, and my mother telling us that last night Tommy MacMahon had seen fairies. Tommy was our gardener, and a practical man, yet he had spoken that morning and told my mother that coming along by the light of the moon he had seen the little people, chaps no bigger than the joint of his thumb, and disporting themselves on the pigsty wall, of all places!

My mother did not believe this story, but Tommy did, and that is the point I want to get at.

There was no earthly reason for his telling a lie; if he had been bent on deception or just romancing he would have made his people dance—they were dancing—round mushrooms or in the flower garden, not on the pigsty wall; besides, in those days, as surely to-day, there were thousands of people in Ireland who saw fairies, including our old cook, Mrs. Du Renzie, who saw worse—a cat with horns on its head. No, Tommy was speaking the truth, and the truth, with all due respect to my friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was more wonderful than any objective demonstration capable of being photographed, for Tommy had the faculty of seeing what was not there—or at all events what was not visible to ordinary people. It was, of course, the air of Ireland, the air I first breathed, and to whose account must be charged the fact that I've seen stranger things than maybe even Tommy ever saw.

My mother, though not a Celt, had a fine

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Tommy had told my mother that coming along by the light of the moon he had seen fairies disporting themselves on the pigsty wall, of all places!

feeling for the Irish people around her. She understood them as far as it was possible to understand them, and love made up for the rest; she never lost her temper with a servant, even when Mike, a new helper in the stable-yard, being told to "take the mud off them wheels" by the coachman, who had just brought a new trap home from Dublin, proceeded to the job with a pocket-knife.

As a result servants stuck to her; one old woman in the form of a nurse stuck to her for years after there was anything to nurse; she didn't function as a servant at all, just hobbled about and took snuff. My mother proposed to pension her, but she said if she was "pinshioned" she'd die. Boiling clothes in the fish-kettle and stirring them with the rolling-pin, sweeping the "flure" under the bed, steaming puddings in other things than pudding cloths, leaving the harness to clean itself—what were all those things compared with the devotion to the family and the curious, shall I say, spirituality, of the old-time Irish servant? The servant and friend of my childhood.

Is it dead, this spirituality that sometimes made a maid or man stick on for no wages in hard times? I don't think so.

A year or so ago my sister interviewed an Irish servant, offering her so much wages, and the sum was refused point-blank. It was considered too much!

Think of that—to-day! But as the only virtue of this paper is to tell the truth about things as far as in me lies, I must admit that the model housemaid when hired did not remain long with my sister.

She was great—but she only lasted a month.

But to return to my earliest youth. In those days, and in my recollection, the queerest little trades were carried on in Kingstown by the strangest people, all friends of my childhood, and all having their influence, no doubt, on my mental development, though I don't exactly know how. Amongst these privates in the army of industry Mrs. Cremmin stands very distinct. She was "The Beggar Woman."

I don't know how she took her degree and the title of The, but I do know that she carried on her business just as a poulterer or fishmonger might have done, and without reproach or loss of social status. "Plaze, ma'am, Mrs. Cremmin the beggar woman is in the kitchen and wants to see you," and my mother would go to see her and no doubt satisfy her wants, which must have been many, for she had twenty-one children, a fact impressed on my memory by the vision of her sitting on the hall-door steps with the "twenty-wanth" on her knees, brought as an exhibit of industry, no doubt.

Yet I never heard of a Mr. Cremmin. Could you imagine such a thing? Yet there must have been one, for my mother was not the person to tolerate twenty-one children without a Mr. Cremmin.

I remember eating sweets taken out of this lady's pocket. That is why she sticks so in my memory, perhaps, almost as tight as the old woman who sold sugar-sticks and materialized periodically on the front door steps, she and jars and jars of sugar-sticks,

such sugar-sticks as are no more seen, striped like barbers' poles with all the colours of the rainbow. Sister to the honey man, who existed I don't know how in the winter, but who appeared every autumn in a white apron with a gravy dish on his head heaped with honeycomb. He walked all Ireland with that dish on his head, and where he kept his main supply Heaven only knows, for he seemed to walk all England, too, turning up, as he did, at Sandhurst when he heard my brother was there!

He stands in my memory against a background of autumn flowers, and glides off the screen to give place to Mr. Stone, the cow doctor, a heavy man who travelled about the country doctoring cows and nothing but cows—a sort of ladies' physician in the bovine way, whom I remember being sent for in post-haste when Norah—not the housemaid—had swallowed a dish-cloth off a hedge and "couldn't get shut of it."

Lastly a lean dark man steals out of the shadows of Memoryland. A perambulating telescope-mender. He called once a year for years. He travelled all over Ireland mending telescopes or putting them right if they were wrong, and every autumn with the regularity of a periodic comet he turned up in our kitchen to warm his shins at the fire and have a "bite and sup." He came not in a professional way, but as a sort of humble friend, and as he had kissed the Blarney Stone he generally left behind him a house- or scullery-maid more or less incapacitated by dreams of marriage.

Now, how did that man know that we possessed a valuable telescope? My mother had forgotten its existence till, fishing it out of a cupboard one year, she gave it to him to overhaul.

Next year he did not return, nor did he return the valuable Dollond lens for which he had substituted a dud worth eighteenpence—nor the hearts he had stolen after all those years of flirtations, colloguings, and back-door whisperings. Well, he is gone, and I sincerely hope not to the place where the cook hoped he'd go to.

My mother knew Charles Lever, she had seen Daniel O'Connell, and though, as I have said, not a Celt, she was well up in Irish folk-lore. She knew old ballads and songs that have gone out of recollection, and not only the songs and ballads of Ireland, but those of England and France as well. She was as good as she was kindly and beautiful, and anything at all I have in the way of a writing gift was hers—is hers. Also my life in a double way, as but for her care and nursing I should have died a dozen times.

I was a skinny child and afflicted with "chronic bronchitis" up to my thirteenth year, and my first introduction to the science

I remember eating sweets taken out of this lady's pocket.

and practice and sometimes humbug of medicine was made on my first introduction to Dr. X., who was eighty if he was a day, had hairs growing out of his nostrils, a white waistcoat, and a stethoscope which he took out of his hat.

It was a wooden stethoscope. He used to place the sharp rim of it on my skinny chest, rest his ear and the full weight of his head on the other end, and then go to sleep —to judge by his breathing. Writhing in agony, his sleep seemed to me to last for hours that were possibly only seconds. Then, rousing and shifting the sharp rim, he would fall asleep on another part of my chest. And it was all bunkum—he could hear nothing, being deaf as a post. Still, he kept up appearances and at the same time obtained rest after his journey upstairs and before his journey down to obtain refreshment. He never used a clinical thermometer, he used to put "fly blisters" on me, and his favourite drug was ipecacuanha wine in heroic doses, yet it was this gentleman who first fired me with the desire to become a doctor—to have a white waistcoat, gold watch, hairs growing out of my nose, and a stethoscope in my hat. I have lived to fulfil my ambition on all these matters except the third, but then you can't have everything in this world, though there are still hopes.

Age 13.

I never had adenoids—no Irish children in my young days ever had adenoids and no grown-ups had pyorrhœa. I doubt if they ever even had chloroform when having an operation. Butcher was the chief Irish surgeon, an heroic figure, who, if he had not wit, possessed its soul, for he could take a leg off in thirty seconds. An operation in those days had all the interest of a horse race beside its more proper scientific interest. From the word "go" and the first shriek of the patient it was whip and spur against time; watches were out and bets were made. It was surgeon against surgeon and record against record, the patient, if he was a sportsman —and even if he wasn't—taking as keen an interest in the event as the crowd.

In those days, if you were bitten by a mad dog you did not go to Paris for treatment; you went about your business till you began to bark, and then you were smothered between two feather beds. But the strangest medical treatment I ever saw in Ireland was in the case of a young girl knocked "spinning" by an outside car in the main street of Kingstown; a quite common dirty man ran up to the unfortunate, took her into his arms, and kissed her!

It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen done, though not, maybe, according to Red Cross and the strictest rules of the St. John's Ambulance Society. Dear Ireland! Could such a thing have happened anywhere else? But to return to my ailments. The Dublin and Kingstown Railway of those days existed for the purpose of taking me to the dentist, and for no other purpose whatsoever. Engines, rolling stock, stations, and ticket collectors all were concrete parts of the terror and misery and gloom that deepened till the waiting-room was reached, and culminated when the bound volume of *Punch* was put in my hands to read upside down till the moment of execution. Yet the Dublin and Kingstown Railway had characters attached to it funnier than any in *Punch*, from the guard who heralded the departure of the Kingstown express with "Take your sates — take your sates — this thrain stops nowhere," to the porter who perambulated the Kingstown platform on the arrival of a train crying "Booterstown — Booterstown — O, Musha, Kingstown, I mane," he having been for twenty years porter at Booterstown and unable to get it out of his head. But these and others had no interest for me, swallowed as they were in the gloom of Hades, the recollection of which has often come to me in my dealings with children, making me very respectful of their fears, their apprehensions, their night terrors, and their fancies.

I don't think we understand the minds of children in the least, no more than we understand the minds of lunatics. We recognize their doings as natural to their state, but that is not understanding, and the doings and sayings of children are sometimes strangely like the sayings and doings of lunatics.

Imagine two stockbrokers, fat for choice, one harnessed to a cart and the other driving him with a whip down Throgmorton Street, one pretending to be a horse and the other a driver, and both enjoying the business. Lunatics—today; yet forty years or so ago their actions would have been considered perfectly natural and sane and understandable even in Throgmorton Street, not because their actions were sane or understandable, but simply because their audience would have remembered acting in the same manner at the same age.

My mother.

The man who says he understands the mind of a child makes a big claim.

I remember grieving over the bitter fate of a little brassheaded nail hammered into a window seat, because my brother told me it was unhappy! I remember believing that babies were dug out of cabbage patches, and putting the matter by as finished and done with. Yet there are people who, looking on children not as people living in a world of their own, but as ignorant adults, try to instruct them about all sorts of things belonging to our world—sex matters, for instance.

I think it is a mistake. I think the cabbage patch people were right; they put up a fence round the garden of childhood just as a man might put up a fence round a garden to keep out pigs. We make gates in the fence and let the pigs in muzzled and dressed in explanations, but pigs are pigs, dress them how you will, and to introduce them at all where they aren't wanted or even understood is, in my humble opinion, a mistake.

But to come to a pleasant subject. Old Dr. X. one rainy day in autumn came into my room, not as a physician but as a fairy godmother. With a wave of his hand he altered my whole life, converting gloom to sunshine and oak to orange trees. In other words, he ordered me to Nice for the winter.

Have you ever seen Nice? I don't believe you have. Certainly if you are under forty, you haven't. Nice died in the 'eighties of high living followed by dropsy and elephantiasis. Only the corpse remains—and she did not make a handsome corpse.

The beauty of Nice in the early 'seventies is for me a memory that is sometimes almost a pain. The perfume of violets, the coloured houses, the orange trees, the brilliant light, the hat black shadows, the coloured gendarmes, the quaint shops of the simple old town, and the Place Masséna on which mortal never more may lay foot, all were part of a dream that has vanished from the world.

A year or so ago, staying at Cap Ferrat, I picked up my courage, took a yellow tram at St. Jean, and started for Nice. The tram stopped in Piccadilly Circus and I got out and remonstrated with the conductor; then I saw my mistake—it was not Piccadilly Circus, it was much, much larger, much uglier and more dangerous; another yellow tram nearly cut me down, and, escaping from a taxi-cab by the skin of my teeth, I reached the sidewalk.

And this was the Place Masséna where I had played as a child, where fifty people would have made a crowd!

We stayed in those days at an hotel on the Avenue de la Garre, now the Avenue de la Victoire. It was at this hotel that I first came in touch with English people. Mid-Victorians with whiskers, and bugles in their bonnets, to whom "Jane Eyre" was an immoral book and who, when the bathing season came round, got into the Mediterranean in bathing gowns. I have seen with my own eyes the father of a family in a long blue bathing gown and ginger-coloured whiskers. He was a parson, it is true, but still—— And the funny thing was that all those funny old people used to go off to Monte Carlo and gamble. They called it "looking at the tables"—bringing back gold plaques (I can see them still),

which they pretended they had picked up as curiosities. And how they grumbled! I can hear the vague sound of it still; at the sunshine, at the mistral, at the French, at the food—always at the food, till the distracted hotel-keeper, determining to please them if only once, served them up "mince pies" on Christmas Day—pies filled, not with mince-meat, but minced-up meat—and still they grumbled!

But the mid-Victorian French were not behind the English (at all events to my childish eyes) in exhibiting strange points. They towed along dogs on strings unlike any other animals I have ever seen; they dressed with a peculiarity that has unhappily vanished. I have seen a Frenchman sitting in front of a *café* whose waxed-out moustaches must have measured a yard from tip to tip, and with an Imperial longer than any stalactite I remember to have seen—but perhaps my memory is at fault. They decorated their houses with pictures of exploding bomb-shells. You can fancy the delight of that to a child! One householder, I remember, painted the whole front of his villa with the representation of a Prussian soldier climbing up a ladder and a French maid on a balcony beating him down with a broom. Figures twice the size of life!

The French of those days were gay with the gaiety of children. Children who have vanished from the world, taking with them their Place Masséna, their gaily-coloured gendarmes, their sunlight, their laughter and myself, for suddenly in the midst of all that riot of colour and joy we did the maddest thing in the world—went back to Ireland.

The sort of thing grown-ups do.

But THE STRAND MAGAZINE refuses to permit me to fill it entirely with this article, and I don't exactly remember when and where I ceased to be young. I don't believe I ever did. As to the sub-title, I always viewed life, as I do to-day, as a pageant more fascinating than any story, more extraordinary than any dream—and casting my eyes back over that pageant, crowded with the movement of half the cities in the world, that long procession of people and kings and armies, beggars and literary folk, white men and yellow men, black men and South Sea Islanders, never have I come across anything to equal in entrancement those twelve tin soldiers I found beside my bed that first Christmas morning in my remembrance, those twelve tin soldiers, in their red breeches and blue coats, price a shilling, if that.

I have seen a Frenchman whose waxed-out moustaches must have measured a yard from tip to tip.

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS, AND MADELON.—No. 7.

The Symbol in the Boot

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

MR. BILLINGHAM, attracted always by the unusual, paused in his early morning stroll through the clean streets, the flower-bedecked squares, and along the glorious Terrace of Monte Carlo, to regard with some surprise the extraordinary spectacle of a man seated before one of the tables outside the Café de Paris fast asleep. The place was almost deserted, save for the sprinkling of visitors who came to take their early morning *déjeuners* in the sunshine, and Ben Hassim, the swarthy vender of carpets, who stood patiently in the background, taking apparently no interest whatever in his immediate surroundings, yet with a curious air of watchfulness in his attitude and shining out of his black eyes. The young man who had attracted Mr. Billingham's attention was seated at one of the tables a little removed from the others, and was sleeping peacefully and apparently naturally. It was obvious to an *habitué* of the place, however, that so unusual a proceeding would before long evoke interference from the authorities. A waiter had already called the attention of a *maître d'hôtel* to his presence; a gendarme from the Square had halted in his promenade and seemed to be contemplating action. Mr. Billingham approached, leaned over the sleeping man, sniffed the air for a moment, and became immediately interested. He summoned the *maître d'hôtel*.

"How long has he been here?" he inquired, indicating the recumbent figure.

"Since the place was opened, monsieur," the man replied. "It seems probable that he spent a great portion of the night here. It is time he moved on."

Mr. Billingham produced a ten-franc note.

"Will you let him remain for ten minutes longer?" he begged. "I shall return by then. I am going to the chemist's. The young man is suffering from the effects of some drug."

The ten-franc note resulted in the usual miracle, and on Mr. Billingham's return, in less than the time he had stated, he found the object of his solicitude still asleep. He poured a little powder into a wineglassful of soda-water and took the young man firmly by the arm.

"You must wake up," he said.

At the second injunction the sleeper opened his eyes and stared around him in a dazed fashion. Mr. Billingham thrust the wineglass into his fingers.

"Drink this," he ordered.

The young man obeyed. Then he blinked several times, stared around him again, and finally looked hard at Mr. Billingham.

"How did I get here, and who are you?" he demanded.

"How you got here is the question we've all been asking," Mr. Billingham replied. "As for me, I'm just an American visitor,

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staying at the hotel yonder. My name is Billingham."

The young man shook himself. He was a sunburnt, good-looking fellow, and had a soldierly air notwithstanding his crumpled clothes, somewhat dishevelled appearance, and the fact, disclosed by the shape of his boots, that one leg was a little longer than the other.

"Well," he declared, "they got me first time. Drugged and robbed, I suppose."

He opened his coat and drew out a pocket-book. A considerable number of mille notes were there, some visiting-cards, and an odd letter or two.

"They've left you some money, at any rate," Mr. Billingham observed.

The young man returned the case to his pocket.

"Yes," he assented. "They haven't touched that. They've taken the packet, though."

He pressed his disabled foot on to the ground for a moment, and leaned back once more in his chair.

"Anything valuable?" Mr. Billingham asked. "Do you want to get in touch with the police? I'm rather close to the chief here."

The other shook his head.

"The packet," he confided, dropping his voice a little, "is not quite so valuable as the people who stole it imagine. All the same, I think I had better be getting along. They'll be after me again as soon as they find out."

He rose to his feet a little unsteadily. There was still rather a drawn look about his face.

"Say, where are you staying?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

"Close here—at the Robespierre."

"I'll walk down with you if you like," his rescuer suggested. "I'm just out to stroll about."

"It would be very kind of you," was the grateful acknowledgment. "To tell you the truth, I'm still feeling a little giddy."

HE picked up his rubber-tipped stick and leaned for a moment heavily upon it. Ben Hassim, the vender of carpets, who had advanced slowly nearer and nearer, salaamed as he accosted them. His white teeth flashed and his smile was as irresistible as ever. Nevertheless, there was a gleam of anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Has the young gentleman been robbed of anything valuable?" he asked, anxiously.

"Why should you think that he has?" Mr. Billingham rejoined.

Hassim patiently deposited one of the rugs, which was slipping from his shoulder, upon the back of a chair.

"Because it was I who brought him down here," he confided. "I found him up in Beausoleil. He was on a chair in front of a restaurant—not a good restaurant. I knew that if he stayed there it would be ill for him. I brought him here. I was waiting until he awoke."

The young man's hand went towards his pocket, but Hassim's arresting gesture was full of dignity.

"I desire nothing," he said. "Only I wish to be assured that the gentleman has not been robbed."

The latter thrust the twenty-franc note back into his pocket.

"Curiously enough, I have not," he replied. "Something was taken from my pocket, but it was of no value to anybody. Anything I had with me," he added, looking intently at Hassim, "which is of value I still possess."

Once more Hassim salaamed. He gathered up his rugs and retreated. They both looked after him curiously.

"That's a quaint fellow," the young man remarked.

"Got something at the back of his mind about you," Mr. Billingham mused, as they walked slowly off together.

"My name is Powell—Leonard Powell," the young man volunteered, after a moment's silence. "I suppose you think that I've been making a night of it?"

"Kinder looks like it," his companion assented.

"Well, I haven't. I'm here on a special errand. I knew I was being watched and I went up to dine at the quietest place I know of—right at the back of the town here. I had half a bottle of wine and a liqueur brandy. The last thing I remember was paying my bill."

"Any ladies about?"

"Not a sign of one," was the emphatic reply.

"Sounds interesting," Mr. Billingham observed, as they neared the hotel. "Sure you don't want me to get you in right with the police?"

The young man shook his head.

"The police couldn't help me," he confided. "If you like to come in and have your morning coffee with me, I'll tell you just the little more there is to be told."

Mr. Billingham accepted with alacrity. They made their way into the almost deserted *salon* of the hotel, and the young man, after a few minutes' absence for a wash and a change of linen, seated himself at the table opposite his guest. His clothes were well-cut, but a trifle shabby. He was, however, entirely presentable, and Mr. Billingham found his original impressions confirmed.

"How long has he been here?" Mr. Billingham inquired, indicating the recumbent figure.

"Read that first," Powell enjoined, producing a newspaper cutting from *The Times*. "I found it in the Personal column a fortnight ago."

Mr. Billingham adjusted his glasses and read :—

"*WANTED. Ex-officer, or young man of courage, willing to risk his life in a dangerous enterprise. Adequate remuneration. No hardship but real danger. Applicant must produce unexceptionable references and be unmarried. Apply Box B. 771, 'The Times,' E.C.4.*"

"I saw this," Mr. Billingham declared, tapping the cutting with his forefinger. "I remember wondering at the time whether it was genuine."

"I should think it is probably genuine enough, judging from last night," the

young man observed. "Anyhow, I answered the advertisement. I happen to have a few decent medals and a pretty good record, and I got the job. I was passed through three hands before I came to the principal. I can't tell you his name, but he is the head of the greatest financial and exploration company in the world. The job when I got it seemed almost ludicrously simple. I was to bring a packet here and deliver it safely to the person for whom it was intended."

"Sounds pie to me," Mr. Billingham commented. "Why don't you deliver it and get it off your chest?"

"It isn't quite so simple as that. Even the person who entrusted me with the commission didn't know exactly who would come for the packet. They could only tell me how to recognize him when he did arrive. Meanwhile, as they warned me, there's an ugly crowd around, who would like apparently to nobble me and get hold of it, whatever it may be."

Mr. Billingham for the first time felt inclined to doubt his companion's *bona fides*. His story on the face of it was scarcely convincing.

"Do you know what this mysterious packet of yours contains?" he inquired.

"Not an idea," the young man confessed.

"Do you know what sort of person you have to look out for?"

"He isn't an ordinary personage," was the somewhat hesitating reply. "I shall probably know when he is here."

Mr. Billingham coughed. The greatest in the world are not infallible. For once in his life he had arrived at a wrong decision.

"Well," he remarked, as he pushed back his chair and rose, "I wish you luck. I must be getting along."

The young man walked with him to the door. The air was filled with soft sunlight and the faintest of southern breezes stirred the leaves of the trees in the gardens on their left. The hour was still early and there were few people about. A dark-skinned denizen of some southern race was reading a newspaper in the little railed-off space in front of the hotel. Powell glanced towards him with a frown.

"Another of the brutes!" he muttered. "On guard, I suppose. Well, good morning, sir. Thank you very much for your help."

MR. BILLINGHAM, whose interest in the affair had experienced a slight revival, had a question to ask, but his companion had already left him. Just before he reached the opposite side of the way, he turned around, conscious of an unusual noise. An elderly gentleman of military appearance was knocking the stone balustrade behind which the solitary occupant of the hotel piazza was seated—knocking it with the obvious intention of attracting the dark-skinned foreigner's notice. Mr. Billingham paused on the pretence of lighting a cigarette. He saw the young man who had been reading the newspaper rise to his feet, and he heard the exchange of a few sentences in the strangest language to which he had ever listened. After a moment or two the foreigner, with a curious little bow, resumed his seat, and the elderly gentleman who had accosted him turned towards the gardens. Mr. Billingham, as he passed, beamed at him amiably.

"If I'm not taking a liberty, sir," he said, "I should very much like to know what language that might have been you were talking just now. Don't seem to me that I've ever heard it before."

"I don't suppose you have, sir," was the not ungracious reply. "I don't suppose there's another white man in the place except myself who can speak it. It's the language of a God-forsaken little country right at the back end of Mesopotamia. I had a draft of the natives in a regiment I commanded during the war."

Mr. Billingham fell into step with his companion and signified his interest monosyllabically.

"Gave me quite a start to see that young man seated there in European clothes," the latter continued. "This place is full, of course, of Anglo-Indians, and there are a few Egyptians, but an Arab of that young man's race very seldom finds his way into civilization—damned fine fellows they are, too, most of them!"

"Did he explain his presence here?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

His companion smiled—a smile with which was associated a slight grimace.

"He did not," he admitted. "He seemed rather disturbed at my recognition, but in the politest possible manner he told me to go to the devil. I wish you good morning, sir. I am due at my barber's."

THE MARQUIS DE FÉLAN, Mr. Billingham's friend and confederate, was in high spirits that evening. He had won almost as much in the afternoon on his two favourite numbers as he had lost the evening before, and he insisted upon paying for the dinner with money which he had previously borrowed from his guest.

"At roulette," he declared didactically, "all that is needed is confidence. I say to myself, 'My numbers will arrive—they shall

arrive.' I see them arriving, and behold they follow one another. But for the unfortunate closing of the tables in the club at eight o'clock I firmly believe that my winnings this evening would have been enormous."

"You did pretty well as it was, didn't you?" Mr. Billingham asked.

The Marquis hesitated.

"I was on the point of doing well," he confided. "I had re-established myself. A little more capital——"

"As a matter of fact," Mr. Billingham interrupted, "a little more capital is what we all need. What about you, Miss Madelon?"

Madelon opened her purse and disclosed its contents.

"I am, what you call, nearly on the rocks," she admitted. "I have a hundred-franc note, perhaps two hundred francs' worth of counters, and a five-hundred-franc note at home in my stocking."

"At home," the Marquis repeated, disconsolately. "I was rather hoping——"

"Quite impossible," Madelon pronounced firmly. "My last five hundred francs does not go to the tables. Dear chief," she went on, turning to her neighbour, "the time has arrived for us to act. Is there nobody here we can rob?"

Mr. Billingham shook his head sorrowfully.

"I can think of no one," he confessed, "whom we can rob safely and honestly."

"One might perhaps draw the line a little less rigidly," the Marquis suggested, polishing his eyeglass.

'I'm not out to look for trouble," Mr. Billingham grunted. "No, thank you! I guess if you're up a gum tree, Marquis, the croupiers at the Sporting Club have raked in the bits. I myself have not touched that whip-up for charity we worked Mrs. Groosens for. And as for Miss Madelon, you know her position."

Madelon shrugged her shoulders with a little gesture of despair. The Marquis hastened to explain.

"A loan, my dear!" he insisted. "I owe you money. I admit it. All shall be paid. In the meantime, however, our need for capital is somewhat urgent. I am delighted to hear that our friend is in a position to make us a small advance if necessary."

"Mr. Billingham is in a position to do nothing of the sort," Madelon replied. "You have borrowed all my money, uncle. Thus must be enough for you. Think of some way of earning it. We will all help. We are an amazing trio—unscrupulous, clever, brave! We are surrounded by pleasure-seekers and fools. There must be some means by which they can be induced to add to our exchequer."

'Guess it's up to you to sound the tocsin, Marquis," Mr. Billingham declared. "You need the money. We don't happen to, just at the moment. Do you get me?"

The Marquis coughed.

"In a partnership like ours," he began, "a certain community of interest as regards——"

"Cut it out!" Mr. Billingham interrupted, brutally. "You've had your share of everything we've done. You've borrowed from your niece, you've borrowed from me. If you can't win, quit it!"

"One needs capital," the Marquis complained. "Besides playing my numbers I have perfected a system which will infallibly bring me in a profit as soon as I get it started."

"Sell it to one of my fellow-countrymen," Mr. Billingham advised. "There are three or four hundred of them landing to-morrow morning. Three or four hundred Americans plumb full of the stuff, with fat pocket-books and large letters of credit!"

The Marquis's eyes glistened wistfully as he toyed with his eyeglass. Suddenly he arrived at an heroic decision.

"I shall go down to the quay," he announced. "I shall offer my services as guide. I will compete with that brawny fellow from Cook's."

Mr. Billingham smiled incredulously. He said nothing, but the effect of the smile was potent.

"You think that I would not do that?" his *vis-à-vis* demanded.

"I'll match you a mille you don't," was the prompt challenge.

The Marquis hesitated for a moment, gulped, and made up his mind.

"Your wager is accepted," he declared. "The money will be mine."

Almost as he spoke the siren of the great incoming steamer rang out its blatant announcement, dwarfing all other noises, audible from Mentone to Beaulieu. Mr. Billingham smiled once more.

"Guess you don't need to worry, Marquis," he observed. "No one will be allowed to land until to-morrow morning. The first tender-full will arrive in the harbour at about nine o'clock, with money oozing out of their finger-nails."

"I shall be there," was the other s valiant pronouncement.

AMONGST several hundreds of other intrepid transatlantic sightseers, there stepped from the tender on to the dock at Monaco the following morning the illustrious family of Henry P. Hooterman of Chicago. The family consisted of Mrs. Henry P. Hooterman, a short, squat lady with an immense capacity for speech, pushing in a crowd,

and managing her own and everyone else's affairs. She was of dark complexion, sallow, and she wore huge tortoiseshell spectacles. She carried a jewel case, which was somewhat ostentatiously chained to her wrist, and in the other hand an umbrella. She had flat feet, which seemed to always take up a little more than their share of room upon the earth, and a voice and mien of authority which had won for her the position of President of the Society of Women Thinkers in her home city. She was accompanied by her daughter, Mamie, who had some claim to good looks and whose eyes were certainly dark and almost beautiful, but whose chances of success in life were considerably handicapped by the maternal environment. There were also a younger daughter, Sadie, still in her early teens, freckled, loquacious, and gawky; a lad, who bitterly resented the whole undertaking; and finally Mr. Henry P. Hooterman himself, a tall, thin man, sombrely dressed, of pallid complexion, who had more the appearance of a Methodist minister than the multi-millionaire he was reputed to be. This estimable quintette stood upon the landing stage and looked around them.

"What we need," Mrs. Henry P. Hooterman said, firmly, "to give us points about this place, is a Cook's man. Hi, you!" she added, lifting her umbrella and addressing an individual in a gold-laced cap. "Say, are you Cook's or American Express?"

The functionary in question, who happened to be one of the five officers of the standing army of Monaco and ignorant of any of the barbarian tongues, turned coldly away. The boy, looking upwards, espied a familiar sight.

"Say," he exclaimed, "there's a trolly-car up there. I guess if we can make the road we can have a ride round."

"Anyway," his father decided, "we'll be moving along."

It was at this precise moment that the Marquis, who had been talking for a moment to the ship's doctor, with whom he had some slight acquaintance, approached. He raised his hat and addressed Mrs. Henry P. Hooterman in his own language.

"Madame is perhaps in need of some information?" he suggested.

They all looked at him blankly; Mamie in frank admiration.

"Say, ain't they some dressers, momma?" she exclaimed.

"Isn't he cute?" Sadie echoed.

'Sorry we don't get you," Mr. Hooterman apologized. "We're Americans."

The Marquis removed his hat once more.

"It is for that reason," he explained in English, "that I have ventured to address you. It appeared to me that you might be in need of some information or advice. I am a resident here. My services are at your disposal."

The little party were at once interested.

"Want to show us round, eh?" Mr. Hooterman ventured doubtfully.

"That would give me great pleasure," the Marquis assented. "I might add that I only offer my services occasionally. I believe I have the honour to address Senator Henry P. Hooterman of Chicago."

So far as the countenance of a man whose skin was rather like dried-up leather could express emotion, it was obvious that Mr. Hooterman was pleased. He smiled in wintry fashion.

'You know me?" he observed.

"Monte Carlo was apprised of your intended visit," the Marquis rejoined with trenchant grandiloquence. "It was to meet you that I am here. I am not, it is true, a professional guide, but I sometimes occupy that position to people of distinction. My services are at your disposal for the day for the sum of five hundred francs."

"Steep!" Mr. Hooterman commented.

"He talks some!" Mrs. Hooterman agreed.

"I think it would be lovely to be taken round by someone who really knows the place," Miss Mamie cooed.

"That will include your meals and all gratuities?" Mrs. Hooterman inquired.

"It will be inclusive," the Marquis promised. "If you decide to engage me, I am at your disposal. Otherwise," he added, glancing across the quay towards another little group——

"Those horrid Smithsons!" Mamie interrupted. "Dad, fix this up, please."

"You are engaged," Mr. Hooterman declared. "Lead on. What shall we do first?"

MANY a time in later days the Marquis's tone shook with emotion when he spoke of that morning. It is certain that he carried out his task manfully. He deposited the little company in an automobile and took them to the Casino. He obtained their *cartes d'entrée* in advance of a long line of their fellow-passengers—a fact which immensely impressed the elder members of the family. He explained the game—to the details of which they listened with great earnestness—and at his suggestion Mr. Hooterman changed a note for a hundred dollars into counters, which, with the exception of a small handful which he retained for purposes of instruction, the Marquis distributed amongst his companions.

"Now," he said, "I will show you how the betting is done."

"My services are at your disposal for the day for the sum of five hundred francs," said the Marquis.

He placed one of the counters on fourteen and one on twenty-nine. One which Mamie thrust upon him he placed on "red." They all watched breathlessly. The Marquis gave a little start as the ball slipped into its place and the croupier's monotonous voice recited the result: —

"*Quatorze, pair, rouge et manque.*"

The Marquis leaned gallantly across, picked up two louis from the "rouge," and handed them to Miss Mamie.

"You have won, mademoiselle," he announced. "So, it appears, have I."

He accepted thirty-five louis and swept them into his pocket. Mr. Hooterman watched him, fascinated. Mrs. Hooterman nudged her husband. Mamie smiled rapturously.

"Say, did you win all that?" she exclaimed.

"I did," the Marquis acquiesced blandly. "By the by, the original louis belongs to your father. Pray take it and place it where you will upon the table."

He returned the counter and explained further the system of staking. Several more ventures were essayed without result. Then, as it had been necessary to leave the boy and Sadie outside, they quitted the Rooms and embarked upon a personally-conducted drive to La Turbie and Mentone, winding up outside the Arcade which led to Ciro's. The Marquis, who had been sitting in front, gallantly helped Mrs. Hooterman and Mamie to alight.

"It is, perhaps, the luncheon hour," he ventured.

"Yes, sirree," Mamie assented, enthusiastically, and with great emphasis.

"You spoke a mouthful, Mr. Guide," Henry junior declared.

The Marquis was puzzled, but gathered that his suggestion was favourably received. They made their way along the Arcade until they were met by a *maître d'hôtel* from the restaurant. The season was waning and they were welcome guests. The manager himself ushered them to a table upon the balcony.

"With what can I have the pleasure of serving Monsieur le Marquis?" he inquired, presenting the bill of fare.

ONE and all, the little party looked up in amazement. The Marquis found them strangely acquiescent in the matter of the luncheon he ordered. They did not even flinch at the idea of cocktails. As soon as the waiter had departed Mamie leaned forward.

"Why did that man with the black tie call you 'Marquis'?" she demanded.

"It happens to be the title which belongs to me," the Marquis explained, dropping his horn-rimmed eyeglass and gazing amiably around. The luncheon he had ordered consisted, curiously enough, of all his favourite dishes, and he felt at peace with the world.

"You mean that you are a real Marquis—a nobleman?" Mamie persisted.

"My family has been noble for seven hundred years," the Marquis replied, modestly, yet with some dignity. "I am the eleventh Marquis de Félan, and I happen to be also a Count of the Holy Roman Empire."

"Say, what are you doing in this guide business, anyway?" Mr. Hooterman queried, after a moment's awed silence.

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"I am not in the guide business," he declared. "To tell you the truth, I have never before undertaken such an enterprise. I happen to be temporarily somewhat embarrassed financially, and a friend of mine—a compatriot of yours, by the by—bet me a considerable sum of money that I would not offer my services to a family from your steamer and show them Monte Carlo. I took the liberty," he went on, with a little bow towards Mamie, "of showing some discrimination, and—well, *nous voilà!*"

"Why, did you ever near anything like this?" Mamie exclaimed.

"Shucks!" her younger sister murmured.

"Say, don't you wear anything if you're a Marquis?" Henry junior asked, discontentedly.

"I knew he wasn't an ordinary guide," Mrs. Hooterman confided under her breath to her husband.

"Here, by the by," the Marquis continued, in high good-humour, "comes the gentleman with whom I made the wager and my niece. Permit me," he added, as Mr. Billingham and Madelon paused on their way to a table, "to present my niece and Mr. Billingham—Mr. Henry P. Hooterman and family."

Mr. Hooterman held out his hand and gazed earnestly at his compatriot.

"Linoleum?" he asked.

"You've said it," was the prompt assent.

"Boots," Mr. Hooterman confided.

"I know the plant," Mr. Billingham declared. "The Hooterman, Steadman Plant, Chicago."

"Sit right down, you and the young lady," Mr. Hooterman invited. "We've just heard of that wager of yours. Join us in a bite of luncheon, sir."

Places were laid and a curious but interesting meal was started. Madelon sat between Mamie and her younger sister and enjoyed herself immensely. Mrs. Hooterman told the Marquis all about the Women's Guild and how she became President, and Mr. Billingham discoursed eloquently on

financial subjects. They were perhaps half-way through a very excellent repast when Ben Hassim, with half-a-dozen carpets hung from his shoulders in picturesque fashion, made his smiling and dignified appearance.

"The gentleman would like to take home to New York something wonderful—a carpet fit for a palace?" he inquired, displaying one of his rugs.

"Say, did you ever?" Mrs. Hooterman exclaimed, gazing hard through her tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles. "What sort of a foreigner might he be, Marquis?"

"Either an Arab or an Egyptian," the Marquis replied. "He probably comes from somewhere beyond Jaffa."

"He looks quite romantic!" Mamie sighed. "Momma, that's a beautiful blue rug."

"A thousand francs," Ben Hassim declared, smoothing it down; "in your country a thousand dollars. I take it to the steamer for you."

Mrs. Hooterman fell to examining the texture of the carpet and Mr. Hooterman began to make facetious suggestions as to possible reductions in the price. Suddenly Mamie gave a little exclamation.

"The Prince!" she exclaimed. "Isn't he handsome?"

They all glanced along the terrace. A man, tall, olive-skinned, with the thin aquiline nose and brilliant eyes of an Arab, dressed in robes of flowing white, with a white turban, and gold bracelets upon his arm, advanced in leisurely fashion towards one of the empty tables, followed by a servant. The vender of carpets dropped his wares and performed a strange genuflectory reverence, to which the other replied only by a slight upraising of his hand. He passed on to the empty table and seated himself, with the servant behind his chair.

"SAY, do you folk know who that is?" Mr. Billingham inquired with interest.

"He's a Sheik or Prince from somewhere in Mesopotamia," Mamie declared. "He got on the steamer at Jaffa. They said that he had flown from Bagdad in an aeroplane which belonged to the British Government. Isn't he just the most picturesque dear that ever lived?"

Mr. Billingham nodded a little absently. There were other things interesting him just at that moment. In the first place, Leonard Powell, the Englishman who had been occupying a table in a distant corner, had risen to his feet and was gazing across with eager interest at the object of Mamie's admiration. Furthermore, the young foreigner who had been seated outside the Robespierre Hotel earlier in the morning had also made his appearance in the Arcade, accompanied by a smaller, coarser, and more vicious edition of himself. The two had paused half-way between the bar and the terrace restaurant, and were talking together eagerly. Their whole attention also seemed concentrated upon the Arab Sheik, who never once glanced in their direction. Then, too, a change had come over Ben Hassim. He had dropped his wares and his eyes were fixed in almost terrified fashion upon the two new-comers. His rugs lay in a little neglected heap upon the floor. He mumbled to himself in some strange dialect. Continually he looked backwards and forwards from the spot where the two had halted to the table where the Arab Prince was seated. The climax of his disquietude arrived when the taller of the former, followed by his unprepossessing companion, began to move forward. Mr. Billingham half unconsciously rose to his feet. He felt the need of freedom in case action was required of him, yet of what might be going to happen he had not the faintest idea. It was Henry junior who first supplied a hint as to the possible course of the proceedings.

"Say, isn't that a dandy dagger?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

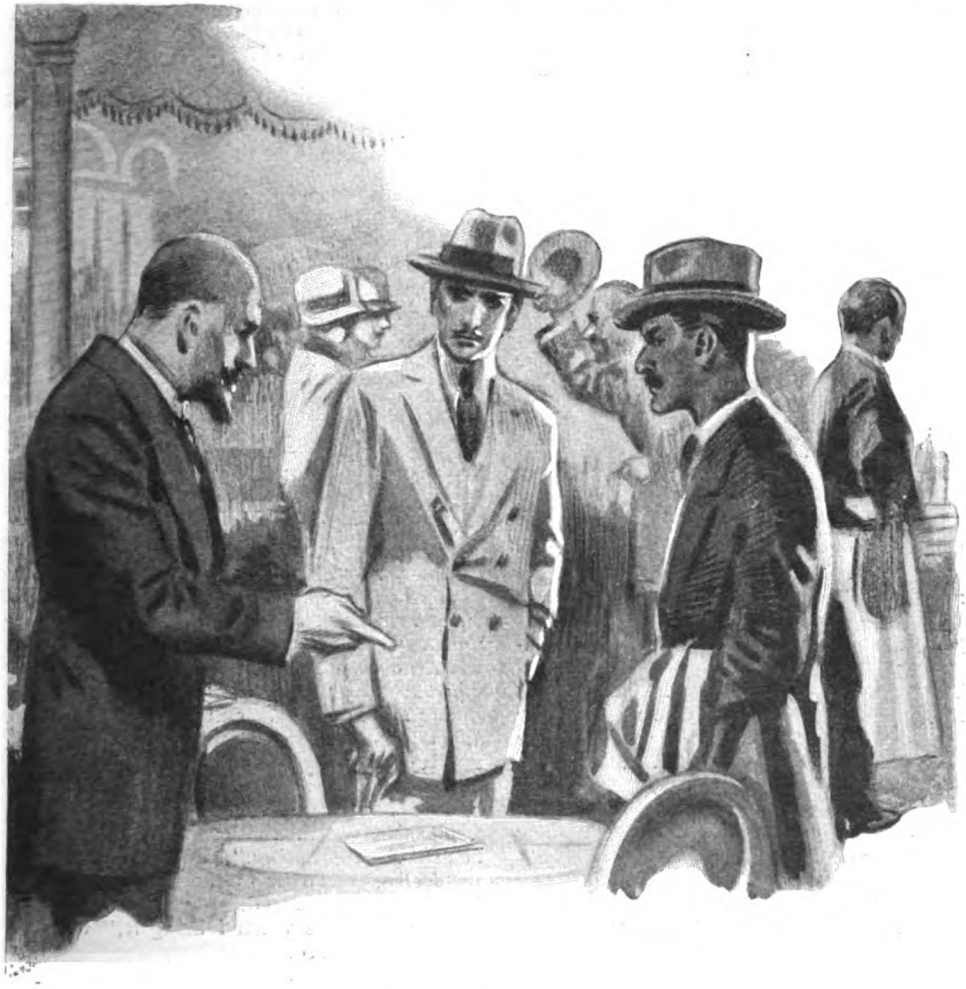
Mr. Billingham's eyes followed the direction of the boy's eagerly-pointing finger. Ben Hassim had retained one of the rugs upon his arm, and beneath its folds, partially concealed, his right hand was gripping a long curved knife of wicked-looking blue steel, the hilt of which was of beaten silver, set with precious stones. With the rug still hanging over his arm, he moved stealthily out until he stood almost as though it were his purpose to intercept the two Europeanized Arabians. The manager of the restaurant, conscious of something unusual, hurried up with an angry exclamation. Ben Hassim took no notice. His eyes were fixed upon the advancing figures. Suddenly he began to talk rapidly in French to the manager. The latter appeared at first bewildered and then incredulous. Finally he turned away towards the two young foreigners, whom the carpet vender was indicating now with almost frantic gestures. He bowed, as though welcoming prospective clients.

"You wish for a table on the terrace, sir?" he inquired.

The foremost of the two young men hesitated. Ben Hassim took advantage of his pause to creep round the other tables and emerge upon the Arcade with one rug still hanging over his arm, effectually concealing the knife, which only Henry junior and Mr. Billingham had seen. He stood between the table where the Prince was seated and the civilized parody of himself,

Ben Hassim, with one rug still hanging over his arm, concealing the knife which only Henry junior and Mr. Billingham had seen, commenced to talk to the Prince in a strange language.

about whose deliberate approach there had been indeed something almost sinister. The latter, checked in his advance by the manager, was led reluctantly to a table. Ben Hassim turned and with head respectfully bowed commenced to talk to the Prince—to talk in a strange language with many gestures and brandishing of the arms, almost with tears in his eyes. The Prince listened without movement, without any sign of hearing. In the end, however, he rose to his feet, and, screened still by the carpet



vender, turned and entered the indoors portion of the restaurant. Hassim stood in the entrance, breathing heavily, drops of perspiration upon his dusky forehead, agitated yet triumphant. The manager came across to him, frowning.

"There are things here," Hassim said, "which you may not understand—nor even I, wholly. You wish to avoid trouble in this restaurant. Go, then, and bring the Englishman to me who sits at the corner table."

The manager was angry. He had a shrewd idea as to what it was that Hassim held in his hand beneath that rug.

"If there is any brawling here," he threatened, "never again shall you bring your rugs to my clients."

"That will be as Allah directs," was the quiet reply. "Send or seek that Englishman!"

The manager, with a shrug of his shoulders, turned away and approached the young Englishman, who had risen from his place but had seemed for the last few seconds uncertain how to act. Mr. Billingham, who had been watching his two nearer neighbours, turned to his companions.

"Will you folk just excuse me one moment?" he begged. "I want to say a word to our dusky friend there."

He made his way to the adjoining table and, uninvited, took the third chair. Neither the young man whom he had seen earlier in the morning, nor his more villainous-looking companion, indulged in any immediate comment upon this very singular behaviour. The former simply looked at the new-comer with expressionless face and eyes from which even inquiry was absent, but the latter's right hand stole promptly underneath the table-cloth and remained out of sight.

"Say, you understand plain English, don't you?" Mr. Billingham asked.

"Naturally," was the calm reply.

"If you don't put your right hand upon the table this second," Mr. Billingham declared, "I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and throw you out, and your gun after you!"

Mr. Billingham's arm was outstretched; a strong, muscular arm. The little Arab with the squinting eyes looked into this intruder's face and decided that it was without doubt the face of a man who meant what he said. He was prompt to obey.

"Now we can talk," Mr. Billingham continued, his eyes straying for a moment to the corner where the Englishman was standing irresolute, leaning upon his stick. "I'm taking a hand in a game I don't quite tumble to, but I guess I'll see it through. You're going to sit here quietly opposite me for another three minutes and let things rip."

"Who are you, and why do you interfere?" the taller of the two young Arabs demanded. "What is your interest in this matter?"

"I guess you'd better not be too inquisitive," was the curt reply.

The young man watched with sullen eyes the Englishman, who, with the manager by his side, was now making his way towards the restaurant. He looked back at Mr. Billingham.

"If you knew what was going on there——," he said, pointing significantly towards the entrance to the restaurant.

Mr. Billingham, not wholly, but partially fell. Ever so slightly he turned his head in the direction indicated. Instantly the younger of the two Arabs, with a movement of incredible swiftness, stooped and half rose again. The sun, which was streaming in through the glass windows, flashed upon his silver-plated pistol. Quick though he was, however, he was not quick enough. With a sudden terrible blow, Mr. Billingham struck and pinned his hand to the table. The pistol clattered harmlessly on to the floor. The young man's eyes glared. There was murder in his face. He dived, sprang to his feet, swayed one way and another. In Mr. Billingham's Herculean grip, however, he was helpless. A couple of waiters hurried forward, followed by the manager. One of them picked up the pistol.

"What is the matter?" the manager demanded.

"Nothing, so long as we don't let him move," Mr. Billingham replied. "There's some trouble going on. I can't get the hang of it, but this little one is the guy who meant mischief."

The Englishman emerged from the restaurant with a smile of triumph upon his face. He waved his hand to Mr. Billingham. Then, recognizing that something unusual had happened, he came over to the table.

"Are you through with your little job?" Mr. Billingham inquired.

"I am," was the prompt reply, "and jolly glad of it, too! Is there anything wrong here?" he added, with a curious glance at Mr. Billingham's companions.

"There might have been if I hadn't taken a chance," Mr. Billingham acquiesced.

"You had better let him go," the taller of the two young Arabs advised, breaking at last his long and impassive silence. "Our task is over. We have failed. The evil has come. The message has been delivered. All that we desire is to depart. I pledge you my word that my brother is now safe. He carries the symbol! He may not be touched!"

Mr. Billingham released his grip, and, in obedience to a sign from the manager, the *vestiaire* brought the two young men their hats and sticks. Very slowly they made their way back down the Arcade and disappeared. Ben Hassim stepped forward from the threshold of the restaurant. Once more he took up his place by the side of his little pile of carpets. Once more that broad and delightful smile illuminated his face.

"It was the great chief of my tribe," he explained. "I had to pay my respects. It is a happy day, this. I will say eight hundred francs. The carpet to you shall be as a thank-offering."

"Delivered down to the steamer?" Mr. Hooterman stipulated.

"You pay me when I bring it," was the dignified response.

"Say, what about that knife?" Henry junior demanded. "Buy that for me, dad."

"Knife?" Hassim repeated, shaking his head slowly and extending his arms. "I carry no knife. One lives in peace on this side of the blue sea."

LESS than a mile from the land the great steamer lay at anchor, blazing with lights. Twice her siren had made the night hideous. Now, with puffing and snorting, the last tender, filled with passengers, had left the harbour. The Marquis, well content, replaced his hat upon his head, lit a cigarette, and stuffed, with amusement, his five hundred francs into his pocket. Hassim gathered up his rugs one by one, after a final glance into the brown leather pocket-book where eight hundred francs were safely bestowed. It had been a great day for him. Suddenly he felt a hand upon his shoulder. He looked round quickly, and perhaps it was some revival of an ancient instinct which

sent his right hand down to the folds of his robe. When he recognized Mr. Billingham, however, he shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Hassim, my friend," Mr. Billingham begged, "put me wise to what has been happening. Curiosity disturbs my digestion. And let me remind you of this. I, too, had a hand in the game. It was I who found the Englishman recovering from his drugs outside the Café de Paris this morning. Even as I led him away the other came down the hill."

Hassim nodded gravely.

"They come from the land which was once mine," he explained. "He, the Prince, who to-night is in the air—for he flies back from Nice to Jaffa, and thence to the valleys where his kingdom lies—and the others, one of whom was his brother."

Mr. Billingham was patient.

"The Englishman brought a letter, or something of the sort," he suggested.

Ben Hassim looked around him. They were walking very slowly along the quay. Perhaps the weight of his rugs was great.

"Listen," he said. "Years ago, before the Great War, there came to the country where I was born—a great kingdom it was, and is, and ever will be—one of those strange Englishmen who seek for wealth. He stayed nearly a year with the King, the father of the Prince and that other. He paid money which made the kingdom of my country richer in camels and horses and women and jewellery than any other, and he took in exchange the land where the oil was. But before he left, so that the King might not go back on his bargain, he took with him the secret token, without which no man can be crowned king."

"The secret token?" Mr. Billingham repeated. "I don't get you."

"It is an image of the first king of my country—two thousand years old—beaten in gold," the vender of carpets continued solemnly. "In it there are emeralds for eyes, rubies for lips, and pearls for teeth, yet so thin is it that a man might carry it in his pocket-book. They took it to England, but when they came to sink the wells and the pledge should have been redeemed, the war came. That other—the youngest son of the King—he chose what they call civilization. He came to England, to school and to college. The Prince remained. Last year the King died."

"Tell me the name of this country," Mr. Billingham begged.

Hassim shook his head.

"Since I left it, I speak of it no longer," he declared. "The King, as I told you, died. That other had become what you see him—a Western creature. He made favour with the Ministers in England. He sought for the throne of his father—the throne which belonged to the Prince—but the Prince, though this is the first time he has ever left his country, was the chosen of the people. He sent to those who owned the token. The land was theirs. The war was over. These English were honest men. The other, he, too, tried for the token. By arrangement—I know not whose—they sent it here. The other followed him. Because he might not raise his hand against his brother, he brought with him a friend of evil repute. If he could take back the token the kingship was his. He failed."

The Marquis caught them up. He was in high spirits.

"Madelon waits for us at the Café de Paris," he told Mr. Billingham. "We have supper together, and you will pay me a thousand francs. The family of Hooterman were well pleased with me. La belle Mamie has presented me with her photograph, Madame has invited me to Chicago, and Monsieur added a benefice to my fee. If you will give me what you owe me, my friend, I may consider paying for our supper."

THEY took a little *voiture* and drove up to the Café de Paris. After the strain of the earlier part of the day, they found themselves singularly gay. At the next table Hassim was stroking one of his beautiful rugs as he displayed it to a little party of new arrivals. The brother of the Prince was dancing with a professional *danseuse*. The Marquis, who was still in high spirits, called for the wine waiter.

"I am appreciating the joy," he explained to his companions, "of leisure and recreation after toil. You others, what have you done? I, on the contrary, have gained—when you, my friend Billingham, have paid me—fifteen hundred francs."

"I," Mr. Billingham protested, "have also been busy. I have saved the life of a Prince."

"And I," Madelon sighed, "have heard all about her Women's Guild from Mrs. Henry P. Hooterman of Chicago."

"I will pay for the wine," the Marquis decided.

(Next month: "The Salvation of Mr. Norton.")

The CHEVAL-GLASS CLUB

By

B. MACDONALD HASTINGS

ILLUSTRATED BY A. E. BESTALL

GRANT met Sir Frank Minning near Christie's.

"Buy anything?"

"Yes, a mirror. Cheval-glass, I think you'd call it."

"Nice one?"

"Delightful. Come and dine with me to-night and I'll show it to you."

"At the club, do you mean?"

"No, no. Can't have the thing sent there. Come to my house at eight. Getting sick of the club, anyway."

"What's wrong?"

"A lot of bally posers, Willie. Somebodies, of course, but fancy behaving like a somebody. Give me men who've never heard about themselves, like you, Willie."

"I hear at income-tax time. Where are you going now?"

"The club."

Willie Grant laughed. He was a heavy, easy-going fellow who had put in a few years as a subaltern and had then travelled, prior to buying race-horses. Sir Frank Minning was his lifelong friend. The tall, white-haired art-collector was older than he, but, despite a divergency of taste, the two were like brothers. They could sit next to each other at the opera without exchanging greetings.

Both men entered a St. James's Street club and sat in a room largely occupied by busts, newspapers, and encyclopædias. It was also occupied by a man with a head uncommonly like a duck and his views on unemployment. Other men, leaning or sitting at various angles, waited for their turn to speak.

Sir Frank and Willie Grant changed the chairs and sat in a corner. Near them were open folding doors leading into another room, and through these doors came the voice of a famous novelist.

"Are you interviewing me for the newspapers?" he was inquiring. "There are several editors who would give me a three-figure cheque for my ideas on such a question. But if you ask with a view merely to make conversation, I give it as my opinion that the women would not tolerate the introduction of bull-fighting into this country."

Sir Frank clutched his friend's arm and took him to the reading-room. Willie Grant sat down to write a letter, and the tall art-collector took a magazine and stretched himself in an easy chair.

"When I played at St. Andrews as a boy," started up a piping old voice, "there were no sand-boxes at the tees. No, sir. The caddies scooped the sand out of the bottom of the hole."

"Really! How frightfully interesting!" purred the nearest golf-maniac.

"Sometimes the holes got so deep that it was almost impossible to recover the ball when one had holed-out."

"And your clubs, Dr. McPhosie? Not like ours now, eh?"

"My clubs, my young friend, consisted of a driver or play-club, a grassed driver, a long, middle, short, and baffling spoon, a wooden niblick, a putter, a sand-iron, a heavy-headed——"

The rest of the sentence was smothered by a deep groan from Sir Frank Minning. He rose, threw down his magazine, and walked to the door.

"Coming up to lunch, Willie?" he threw over his shoulder.

"Soon as I've finished this letter."

Dr. McPhosie now whispered to the youthful victim of his golfing reminiscences that Sir Frank was probably suffering from an internal complaint. "Constantly starting and moaning during other people's conversation. Very strange."

At the lunch-table it was Sir Frank's fate to be joined by a food specialist and crank. He freely criticized the art-collector's choice from the menu-card.

"A vast section of the British public," said this personage, who was large and pink and alto-voiced, "never taste flesh other than beef, mutton, and pork, the staple meats of all white people, to which may be added rabbit, fowl, and fish."

"How true, how true, how true!" sighed Sir Frank.

"The law of Moses banned pork, to which abstinence the Mohammedan subscribes."

"I am eating beef, Hoopersen."

"The Hindu reverences the cow and will not defile himself by eating beef. The Siamese, I might mention—— Salt? Certainly—the Siamese proscribe the killing of any animal, although they do not scruple to eat anything that has died a natural death."

Willie Grant joined his friend and ordered some pigeon pie.

"Pigeon, eh?" remarked Professor Hoopersen. "Well, it is not a bird to excite the stomach to prejudice. Do you recall that the Divine Law forbade as food the eagle, the vulture, the kite, the raven, the hawk, the cuckoo, the swan, and the bat? The vulture, by the way, is said to be passable, but I should not care to eat one that haunted the Towers of Silence outside Bombay. The Parsees expose their dead there, you know, that they may be devoured by the vultures. Ha, ha!"

After lunch it was the misfortune of Sir Frank and Willie Grant to find themselves among the motor-maniacs, whom apparently no club can exclude.

"The brakes, old man, are of the four-wheel pattern. Very smooth in action and as strong as you could want 'em."

"The carburettor and the starting motor, old bird, are enclosed under detachable aluminium plates at the base of the cylinder block."

"Fourteen horse and thirty-five to the gallon."

"Roads so crowded I only got into top gear twice."

"Yes, six sparking-plugs and short lengths of high-tension cable."

"Coming up to lunch, Willie?"
"Soon as I've finished this letter."

AT dinner that night Sir Frank protested to Willie Grant that he really could not stand the club any longer.

"No one behaves naturally there. Individually I have no doubt that the great majority are first-rate fellows, but they change when they assemble. Or is it that the building has something to do with it?"

"The building, Frank?"

"Well, the size and dignity of the house. I have an idea that in a less pretentious place, with smaller rooms, you know, they would all be much more human. Now they seem to visit St. James's Street to boast. The cranks air their views out loud instead of writing them for the magazines. The golf-maniacs and the motor-maniacs must express their ego somewhere, I suppose, but big staircases and lofty halls, instead of quelling them, seem to inspire them to more and more noisy frenzies."

"It's the same in every club."

"I suppose it is. But I do wish I could find a place where I could spend my last few years in the company of quite natural, unaffected people."

"Don't talk of last few years. We shall want you to fight in the next war. And don't expect unaffected people anywhere where the human body is clothed and there is a looking-glass to look into. By the way, where's this new purchase of yours?"

"Ah, yes. The cheval-glass. Take a cigar, Willie, and come upstairs. It's in my bedroom."

SIR FRANK'S bedroom was a room in which a Peace Conference might have been held. The small single bed was not readily picked out from the furniture. There were many exquisite pieces, and one wall was breasted with books.

The new purchase stood on a table and rested against the wall, pending a decision as to where to hang it. It was a mirror measuring forty-six inches by twenty-six inches and was superbly framed in silver.

"Venetian?" asked Willie Grant.

"Undoubtedly. A Murano, if you know what that means."

"I don't."

"Want to?"

"You bet."

"Well, two men of Murano begged, borrowed, or stole the secrets of a German glass house, beginning of sixteenth century. Venice gave them exclusive right to make glass mirrors for twenty years. That is one of the products."

"Priceless, eh? How were they made?"

"From blown cylinders of glass, which were slit, flattened on a stone, polished, edges bevelled, and the backs silvered by an amalgam."

"A perfect surface."

"Purity, absolute purity. Have you ever seen your face so mercilessly reproduced?"

"Does it need mercy, Frank?"

"Even as mine, Willie."

Willie Grant looked long into the mirror. "It is most uncanny," he said presently. "I seem to see myself as I never saw myself before."

"Well, you've been looking into it longer than you usually look into a mirror."

"Yes, but I am forced to do that because it seems to tell me so much more than the ordinary mirror."

"Just a perfect reflector, that's all. I shall like to look into it as I die."

"Don't be morbid. But I'll say the thing fascinates me. Makes me feel self-conscious, you know, but self-conscious in the right way. Humble, Frank, and a little ashamed."

"Do our friends good at the club, then?"

"Forget the club. You know, Frank, I'm going to ask you to let me look into that glass once in a while."

"Whenever you like."

"A man couldn't do anything artificial with that reproducing him."

"A cure for swollen-headed politicians, eh?"

Downstairs again, Willie said to his friend: "You were right to mention our club in connection with that mirror. I believe it would tone some of them down."

"But I don't give sacks of guineas away for the purpose of taking the shine out of haloes."

"Why should you? A loan was in my mind."

"Willie, don't be silly. Whoever heard of anybody loaning a mirror to a club? The club has mirrors. They would accept it as a gift, of course, but it would be because of its worth as an object of art."

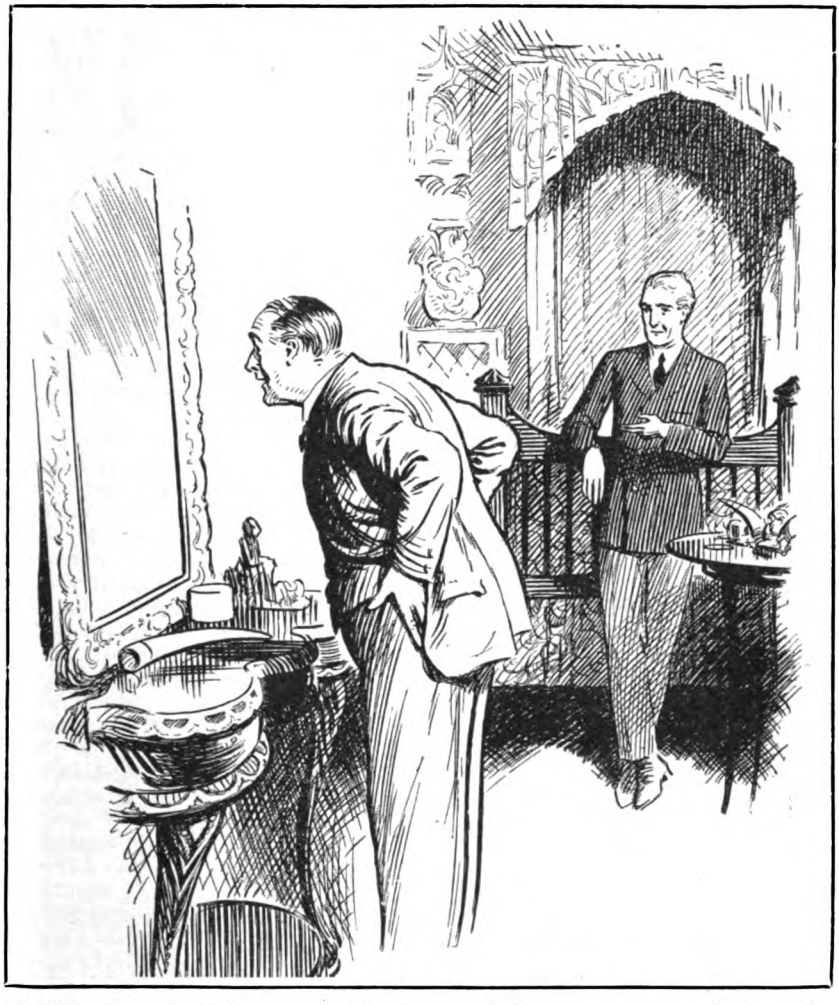
"Yes; and, come to think of it, why waste such a beautiful thing on 'em? It's worth building up a club round it."

"By Jove, Willie!" Sir Frank's eyeglass dropped. "Building up a club. Why the dickens shouldn't we?"

"Speak on, master of millions."

"Look here, Willie. We both hate all clubs, and the one we used to-day most of all. Why should we not have a club just for plain, wholesome, natural beasts that a man can always talk to? I could finance it, put in a manager, and we'd limit the membership to fifty, say."

"No particular difficulty about that. But what will there be about this club that will ensure the decent beasts behaving in it like decent beasts? It would have to be a beautiful place. Your æsthetic passion would see to that. Then it would be



Willie Grant looked long into the mirror. "It is most uncanny," he said. "I seem to see myself as I never saw myself before."

exclusive. And that's enough to make even an Underground railway porter put on frills."

"Wait a bit. A handful of rooms I'd take. Largest would be the mess, seat thirty, say. Severe furnishings. . . . Wait, wait. . . . Comfy smoker, of course. Best of food and no rules."

"No rules is good. God, how I hate rules."

"All men hate rules, and yet, when left alone, the first thing they do is to formulate more of them. Even we should have to have one."

"We? You're going the pace."

"I am, but you started it."

"What way?"

"That cheval-glass, of course."

"Oh, I see."

"How about calling it 'The Cheval-Glass Club'?"

"Oh! And have that mirror in the lobby? Bully for you, Frank."

"Exactly. And here is my idea of the rule, the one rule which members of the club would have to obey. Give me a pencil."

Sir Frank scribbled and altered for a few moments, and then showed this to his friend:—

"Each member upon entering will be under an obligation of honour to scrutinize his countenance for the space of a full minute in the cheval-glass provided for that purpose in the hall."

"I don't like 'countenance.'"

" Very well. We'll make it ' face.' "

" By Jove, Frank, it's worth trying. Let's go up and look into that cheval-glass again."

They did, and held a hand-lamp to their heads while they did.

" Don't run away with the idea there's anything abnormal about the thing. It's as normal and as truthful a sheet as I ever set eyes on."

" But, Frank, in some odd way it does seem to know all about you. And more than that. It proves to you that anyone who looks at you hard enough can know all about you."

" You'll find that message in any mirror. But as we're going to found a club round one, it's a good thing we've got the best in the world."

The stout friends of Sir Frank Minning and Mr. Willie Grant fell in rapturously with the idea of " The Cheval-Glass Club," and fifty members were soon enrolled. The happy notion of making a man stare at himself for a full minute before he faced his fellow-members appealed to prominent men in all branches of life. No one of these men thought that he had ever carried his halo into a club, but he was sure that other fellows did. A good, easy, natural fellowship at last !

Most suitable premises were found. There was a gem of a little hall, containing a long window, a fireplace, and a door leading to a cloak-room. The window lit up the hall well in daytime, and Sir Frank's Venetian mirror was hung between the fireplace and the cloak-room in a place where those entering by day would be best illuminated. Then a staircase led to three comfortable rooms on the first floor.

" The most important man in this club," said Sir Frank to his joint-founder, a few days before the opening of the premises, " will be the hall-porter. It will be his business to see that each member abides by the rule."

" To watch that they look in the glass and time 'em, do you mean ? "

" Yes, but he must be the soul of discretion. I think I've got the very man. He's an old Scotch soldier, highly respectable and not at all likely to regard the mirror-gazing as a joke. At any rate, I had no difficulty in persuading him that it wasn't. If members forget or do not finish the minute, he will draw their attention to the slip with all the deference of a Guards sergeant combined with the exhortatory manner of an Archbishop. Yes, Willie, the scheme is going to get a fair trial."

" I'm positively longing for the opening day."

" We shall not be there."

" Not there ! Surely to goodness——"

" That first day, Willie, will be a very embarrassing day, put it as you will. We, as conceivers of the scheme, shall be at an advantage. We are, for one thing, accustomed to the cheval-glass. I do not think it will be possible for us to sit in the club and watch our fellow-members enter. I'm thinking of the spirit in which we must watch them. It will not be quite what we started the club to obtain."

" I follow you. But when do we visit our own club ? "

" On the second day. Most of the members will then have had their first taste of the effects of their one minute's scrutiny in the glass. In any case we shall not know if they are freshers or not. We should enter when we are sure that others have preceded us, and go through our minute's ordeal if possible in the presence of fellow-members."

" I quite agree."

AT about 1 p.m. on the day after the opening of the club, Sir Frank and Willie Grant went together to the premises.

The Scotch hall-porter greeted them.

" Many members in yesterday ? "

" Forty-two, sir."

" Very good. They all conformed to the rule, of course ? "

" They did, sir."

" All scrutinized their faces for a full minute ? "

" Not all, sir."

" Oh, how was that ? "

" Some stopped before the minute was up."

" The dickens they did ! And did they go upstairs after failing to obey the rule ? "

" They did not, sir. No one went upstairs."

" No one—went—upstairs ? "

" No, sir. Some of the members looked in the glass for a full minute and some for less, but every one of them then put on his hat and coat and went away afterwards."

An hour later Sir Frank said to his friend : " Come to think of it, Willie, we men get together in such places as clubs not to share shame but to be exultant. If we see ourselves exactly as we are, we cannot help but be ashamed. I think I shall present that mirror to the House of Commons."

ANIMALS IN FICTION

by

Caroline F. Richardson

ALONG the road of story-telling that stretches from remotest past to dimmest future, there have travelled not only men and women, gods and devils, but also beasts and birds, fishes and reptiles. Sometimes these creatures of the animal world have been mere accessories to the story, sometimes they have been the whole reason for the story's being. In either case they have enjoyed immense popularity, for mankind has always felt a keen interest in his next of kin, has always noticed his own resemblance in features and in characteristics to his brother the ox or his sister the sheep.

In very early narration the part played by animals was likely to be a leading one, or at least one commensurate with that played by man. To the primitive mind, man and animal were equal. If superiority there were, it was possessed by the animal, who was obviously stronger, swifter, bigger, and presumably wiser than man. In many instances moreover, the animal characters of fable and fairy-tale are endowed not only with intelligence, resource, and determination, but also with fine traits of character and high degrees of courtesy. Arion's dolphin and the White Snake, for example, display extraordinary efficiency, and in addition they possess a pleasant, comradely quality that has had much to do towards ensuring their immortality.

Some other long-ago creatures owe their prolongation of life largely to their social position: Balaam's ass and Pegasus have impeccable references, but they lack charm and personality. Still others are famous because of their fantastic features or figures. Such animals once acquired interest and still retain it, not through their manners or morals, but rather through their personal appearance and mysterious antecedents. Hippogriffs and basilisks, griffins and salamanders, unicorns and dragons, all have little but their looks to recommend them; yet they exert a fascination that normally formed, well-behaved animals cannot compete with. A griffin, for example, who could at one and the same moment blink his eagle-eyes and switch his lion-tail would inevitably be better remembered and more respected than would Princess Periezade's clever Talking Bird, or St. Mark's mannerly lion, or a modern author's chivalrous house-dog.

Nello and Patrasche, the dog of Flanders, the chief characters in "Ouida's" famous story.

The narrow line that to the childlike mind of long ago divided man and animal was often obliterated by the pleasant theory of

metamorphosis which permits characters to play double parts whenever plot makes an outward and visible change advisable. Thus, Tuan MacCairill lives on after the Flood by taking, successively, the forms of a stag, a boar, a hawk, and a salmon; Taliesen, when pursued, changes with incredible swiftness from beast to fish, to bird; and the Two Swineherds of ancient Irish story have a particularly lively time as ravens, warriors, sea monsters, demons, worms, and oxen. Circe's swine, Beauty's Beast, the White Cat, and the Blue Bird (Mme. d'Aulnoy's) are all examples of successful transfers from human to animal form and back again. *Loups-garous*, swan-maidens, and other cross-creations are instances of the effort to account for animal traits in man and human traits in animals. Story-telling has used these mysterious beings freely, although a werewolf was an unpleasant and dangerous acquaintance, and a swan or serpent lady was likely to prove an embarrassing housemate. But all three were first-rate plot developers. They brought their climaxes with them.

Anna Sewell's "Black Beauty" is one of the earliest and best-known examples of animals in fiction.

By permission of Jarrolds.

There is, however, another group of man's animal associates that is far more agreeable to consort with—the friendly beast. Sometimes this modest, unselfish animal may be of real value to the story and take upon itself the responsibility of plot construction, as does Puss-in-Boots or the Falcon of Federigo in the "Decameron," which he sacrificed to give his lady-love a dinner, having nothing else at hand—it must have made tough eating, one would think!—but usually no more is asked of the amiable assistant than to provide advice, as does Whittington's cat, or melancholy detail, as does Mother Hubbard's dog, or house furnishings, as do the Three Bears—who were not friendly by intention. In the mediæval romances there are innumerable helpful beasts who guide heroes to waiting and willing fairy maidens, or who warn when danger threatens, or who carry messages between separated lovers. By the Middle Ages animal had become much subordinated to man, but, in the judgment of his human contemporaries, animal was animated by the same feelings as his superior. The birds and beasts of the romances and saints' legends love and hate, are courtly and belligerent, and even know the Otherworld.

No more resourceful and considerate animals have ever had their stories written for our learning than have those of the "Golden Legend." There was a lion healed by St. Jerome that remained at the monastery to act as a beast of burden; another lion found St. Zosimus attempting feebly to dig a grave and the lion promptly dug the grave himself, and "departed debonairly." The wild beasts sent to devour St. Eufemia not only fawned upon her, but they "joined their tails together, and made of them a chair for her to sit on." (Furthermore, they ate the judge who had directed the torture.) St. Francis's lambs went to church and kneeled at the proper moments; flocks of birds heard his sermons with reverence; and fish listened while St. Brandon said Mass, and hearkened to St. Anthony's sermon preached especially for them.

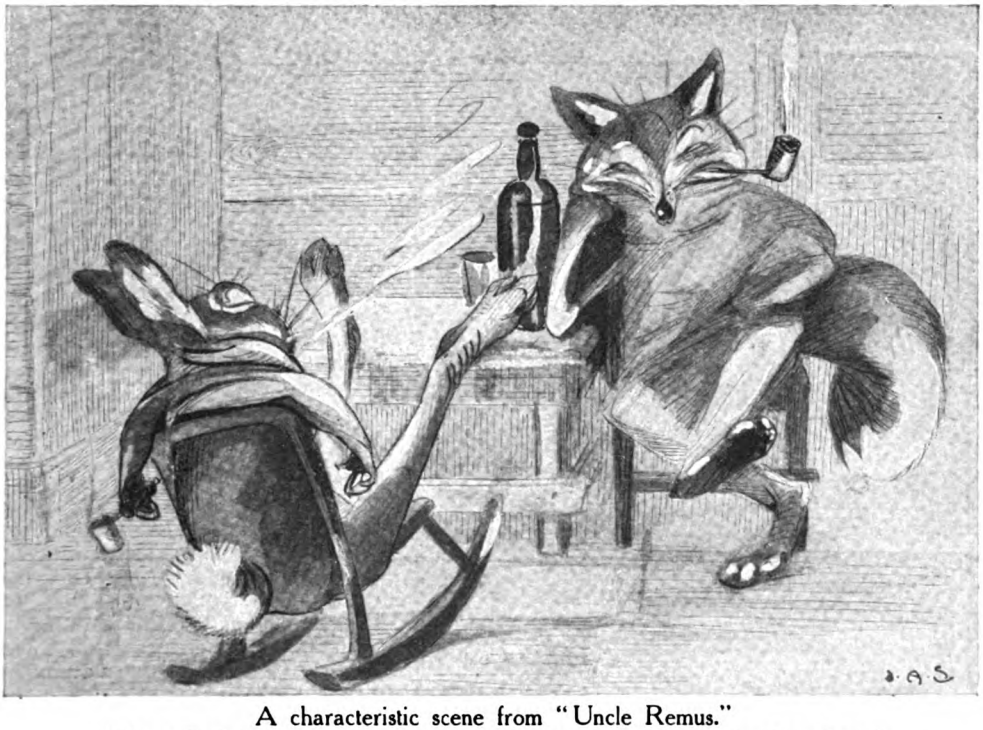
Perhaps the very prettiest of these legends is the one that begins: "What time St. Francis abode in the city of Agobio, there appeared in the country of Agobio an exceeding great wolf, terrible and fierce, the which devoured not only animals, but also

men." Everyone knows the story, how St. Francis acted as intermediary between the townsfolk and the wolf, how the Saint showed himself not unaware of the wolf's side of the quarrel: "Brother wolf, sith it pleases thee to make and hold this peace, I promise thee that I will see to it that the folk of this place give thee food alway so long as thou shalt live, or that thou shalt not suffer any more, for that I wot well that through hunger hast thou wrought all this ill." Then "the wolf knelt him down and bowed his head, and with gentle movements of his body, tail, and eyes gave sign as best he could that he would keep their pact entire."

Moral lessons are probably the heaviest burden laid on the animals of fiction. From the earliest times, philosophic and ironic thinkers have utilized them to make clear the weakness and wickedness of mankind.

Beast fables have, oddly enough, never lacked admirers, though they usually offer moral lessons. "Black Beauty" and "A Dog of Flanders" are lineal descendants of the beast epic and present their lessons clearly. Sterne's starling is allegorical, and so are Rostand's Chantecler and Maeterlinck's Blue Bird. Mark Twain's "A Dog's Tale" is a sentimental allegory. But a beast fable is not obliged to be moral or satirical: it makes and breaks its own rules, and it is most successful, artistically, when it merely tells a good story, as is proved equally well by examples from "Uncle Remus."

Present-day fiction includes many instances of animals playing either major or minor *rôles*, the stories of Jack London—especially "The Call of the Wild"—being amongst the most popular.



A characteristic scene from "Uncle Remus."
"Brer Fox'd call on Brer Rabbit, en dey's set up en smoke der pipes."

By permission of Chatto & Windus.

In doing this, the story-teller has fastened certain traits upon helpless beasts. Long ago it became an accepted conclusion that peacocks are proud; mice, timid; lions, brave; geese, silly; doves, meek; and pigs, greedy. The convention of poetry is especially insistent that a robin, a lark, and a nightingale shall not depart from their respective song-programmes of cheerfulness, aspiration, and love.

In the effort to emphasize pathos or cleverness, an author asks us to believe that a horse will out-Bayard Bayard in chivalric delicacy, that a dog will exhibit a resourcefulness in conducting his master's affairs that would put human achievement to shame, and that a wolf will evidence a self-control and initiative equal to that of the graduate of a correspondence-school course

in will power. It is quite true, of course, that an animal does often seem to possess an uncanny comprehension of a human's mood, but such understanding results from keen physical senses, not from a man-like brain and soul. It is not truth alone, however, that ensures immortality, and many a "real" animal is forgotten while a creature compounded of pathetic fallacies will live to become an Allusion and a Reference. Sterne is a good example of a writer who can fairly wallow in animal sentimentality and yet remain entertaining. His high-water mark, unquestionably, is Uncle Toby's impassioned address to a fly: "'Go'—says he, one day at dinner, to an overgrown one which had tormented him cruelly all dinner time, and which after infinite attempts he had caught at last as it flew by him. 'I'll not hurt thee,' says my Uncle Toby, rising from his chair and going across the room with the fly in his hand,—'I'll not hurt a hair of thy head. Go,' says he, . . . 'go, poor devil . . . why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.'"

But occasionally there arises an honest craftsman who shows the animal as it actually is. Stevenson's Modestine is completely a donkey—"patient, elegant in form, the colour of an ideal mouse." Even Dickens, admittedly a sentimentalist, resisted any temptation to humanize Paul Dombey's friend, Diogenes, or Bill Sikes's snarling companion—though, being Dickens, he did note mannerisms, as in the case of the pony, Whisker (in "The Old Curiosity Shop"), or Dora's Jip (in "David Copperfield"). Scott's Jackanapes is a monkey only (in "Wandering Willie's Tale"); Daudet's mule—the one that reserved the kick—had a normal mule nature; Kipling, though he did create the lofty-minded Bagheera, Balor, and Kaa, also created Bimi. Now, Bimi is real. Bimi is animated by brute sensations only, he has no manners, no morals, no inhibitions of any kind. He is jealous of his master's wife, and he satisfies his jealousy as an orang-outang might be expected to: he tears the woman into quite small pieces. And Poe's orang-outang is equally true to type.

"John Thornton and Buck looked at each other."

Of the dogs that played prominent parts in Jack London's stories, probably none is more popular than Buck in "The Call of the Wild."

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There is a sort of pseudo-animal story that gives sheer pleasure to the reader, stories in which animals are neither entirely divested of brute traits nor altogether suffocated with human attributes. A certain "Cats' Arabian Nights" was of this nature, but a better-known example is "The Ugly Duckling." Now, allegorical (and psychologically false) though it be, "The Ugly Duckling" is a completely satisfying story. It is so entirely reasonable that the ducklings should exclaim on coming out of the shell: "How immense the world is!" and any tom-cat and hen might easily fall into the habit of saying: "We and the world!" and might sensibly suggest to a duckling—an ugly one—that it would have no worries if it would just lay eggs like the hen, or purr like the cat.

A field rather crowded with animals of this variety—partly human, partly bestial—is that of the nonsense story. There have been quantities of foolish and ephemeral animals created to amuse children. But the creatures in "Alice in Wonderland" are among the immortals in literature. The reader, young or old, enjoys equally the Walrus and his

associate, the Carpenter. The March Hare is on the same plane as the Hatter. The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, the White Rabbit (his letters were addressed to Mr. W. Rabbit), the Cheshire Cat, the Mouse whose tale dwindles into very fine print, the guinea-pigs that invite continual suppressing, are quite as genuine (and far more satisfying) than any beast burdened with lessons could possibly be. Frank R. Stockton handled his fantastic animals most pleasantly. There was a fearsome griffin that became the warm friend of a minor canon, and a penitent hippogriff that is not easily forgotten. Many of the most famous nonsense animal stories are in rhyme; the romance of the Owl and the Pussy Cat, the death and burial of Cock Robin, and the lamentable tale of the Frog who would a-wooing go, are verse tales of proved charm and longevity.

Bill Sikes and his dog—a famous scene from "Oliver Twist."

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Animals have even made their way into ghost stories. They may be ghosts themselves or they may merely contribute to supernatural effects, as when they cower and shrink from something the human cannot see or sense. And occasionally an author sends an animal to heaven, following a precedent established by the mediæval romances, which dispatched all sorts of creatures freely to and from the Otherworld. The Moslem creed, I have heard, admitted ten animals to heaven, Jonah's whale and Balaam's ass being among the number.

A higher authority than Æsop has told us to go to the ant and consider her ways; the home life of the mouse has been commended, and the rat's sense of justice has been extolled because of his promptness to punish Bishop Hatto:—

"They have sharpened their teeth on the cold grey stones
And now they are gnawing the Bishop's bones."

The mosquito finds a supporter (rarely, it is admitted) in those who remark its cheerful singing note; the fly has Uncle Toby and St. Francis for champions, and is established in our sympathies as the pitiful victim of the spider; the blue caterpillar in "Alice" has a superior if caustic personality that wins our respect and uneasy admiration; and the sparrow is lauded by Æsop to the detriment of the reputation of the cuckoo.

We humans may concoct poison for the extermination of the industrious ant; we may rat-proof our buildings and wharves; we may swat our flies; we may oil our pollywogs and wiggletails; we may spray our caterpillars and shoot our sparrows; but all the while Story-telling looks on, tolerant and amused, knowing that in various countries, in varying times, narration of one sort and another has been frowned upon,

THE UGLY DUCKLING.

"The poor duckling was quite melancholy because it looked ugly, and was scoffed at by the whole yard."

starling. "I know my business," says Story-telling. "I've been at this work several thousands of years and I have contracted to continue it during good behaviour. I like the procession on my road, and I do not intend to give permanent place to any new figures. I will adapt and renovate costumes, I will teach new marching steps, I will heat up or cool off everybody's temperatures—but I refuse to add to or reduce the numbers of those who walk in my procession. Do you know," continues Story-telling, "when the reading-public scolds me about the travellers on my road, I am always reminded of the Fable of the Gnat and the Bull:—

"Once the Gnat lighted on the horns of the Bull. 'My dear fellow,' said the Gnat, with as great a buzz as he could manage, 'pray excuse the liberty I take. If I am too heavy, only say so, and I will go away.'

"'Stay or go,' said the Bull, 'it makes no difference to me. Had it not been for your buzz, I should not even have known you were there!'"

even forbidden; yet that narration persists with perhaps only a greater emphasis on such details as were disapproved by authority.

We cannot hope to cause the story-teller any uneasiness. He knows much better than we book-reading folk of the moment can know that common sense holds for a day only: to-morrow and all of yesterday belong to the imagination. No actual dog, however companionable, will ever supplant the dog-in-the-manger; no latter-day wolf can ever expect to dim the memory of Red Riding Hood's assailant; and no study of a bird, from life, will take the place of Sterne's wistful

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

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Bradsmith was Right

by

DENIS MACKAIL

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

BRADSMITH, who is a successful author, and therefore a law to himself, had swept across my orbit as I was weighing the risks of crossing Waterloo Place, and, as is his successful and autonomous way, he had made his presence known by slapping me violently on the back—thereby all but precipitating me into the gutter.

"Haven't seen you for ages," he shouted. "Which way are you going?"

I had just been dining alone at the club and was thinking of going home; but somehow or other one can never tell Bradsmith that one is going home. His vitality makes this impossible.

I hesitated.

"Well, walk up with me to the Corona," he went on, taking my elbow and urging me forward into the traffic. "And tell me all your news. How's——"

Here he broke off to nod at a man who was crossing the road from the other side.

"Hullo, Tommy!" he sang out.

"'Lo, Braddy, old boy," replied the stranger.

An omnibus then came thundering down on us. The stranger ran for his life, and Bradsmith dragged me forward on to the pavement.

"That was Tommy Trent," he informed me. "Used to play in my shows in America. Glad he didn't stop."

I have noticed before that successful authors are always glad when actors who have played in their shows do not stop. I have often wondered why this is, but it was no use asking Bradsmith at the moment because—well, I couldn't very well interrupt him.

"Yes," he was saying, as we swung up the hill together, "I've been meaning to look you up for weeks, but you know what it is. Work. Rehearsals. Running around and seeing fellows. I tell you—— Oh, hullo, Wally! How's yourself?"

A second stranger had suddenly sprung up in our path. A gaunt man, with a very wide-brimmed hat worn slightly on one side.

"'Lo, Braddy, old man," he replied. "I say——"

"Can't stop," shouted Bradsmith, while I panted by his side. "Come and have lunch one day. What? Yes. I'll call you up."

The gaunt man fell back—no one who hadn't got Bradsmith's arm through theirs could possibly have kept pace with him—and was swallowed up in the night.

"Walter Daventry," my companion informed me. "Played lead in one of my tours. Glad we gave him the slip."

And on we went.

Crossing Piccadilly Circus we met Arthur Golden—who had played in the film version of one of Bradsmith's books—and a few yards up Shaftesbury Avenue we fell in with Johnnie Pender—who had done well, so Bradsmith advised me, with one of his plays in Australia. Both these gentlemen, however, as well as a fifth mummer whom we met at the corner of Dean Street, but whose name I have forgotten, were dealt with as summarily as their predecessors. They all called Bradsmith "Braddy," and he was no less punctilious in using their Christian names; but having effected this exchange, his one idea seemed to be to shake them off. And this object he invariably achieved.

"Of course," he confided to me, "one can't offend these fellows. Touchy devils, you know. But if I were to stop and listen to all their stories——"

He sighed. And for perhaps as much as a

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tenth of a second I felt that being a successful author wasn't all jam—even if it were more fun than being a partially successful actor.

"Yes," said Bradsmith, as though reading my thoughts, "it's a ghastly profession. I sometimes wonder——" And then he must have remembered his royalties, for quite suddenly he cheered up.

"I'm sorry we've had so many interruptions," he said, "but I do want to hear all you've been doing. Look here"—an idea seemed to strike him—"I've got to go and see Corbett—something about a new show for one of his theatres—but if only you could wait——" He frowned, as though considering where he could park me. "I've got it!" he exclaimed. "Come along and see Freddie Barfield. He'll keep you amused."

Fred Barfield—it was thus that he was billed outside the Corona Theatre, where we were now standing—has spent the last twenty years in keeping people amused, in return for a steadily increasing salary, and I had often laughed at him myself from the front of the house. I had no doubt, either, that if he wanted he could also keep me amused in his dressing-room, while Bradsmith wrestled with his manager upstairs. But why should he be put to this trouble, when he didn't know me from Adam? It hardly seemed fair.

I put this point of view to my friend.

"But Barfield won't want a stranger in his room," I said. "Hadn't we better have our talk another night? I mean, perhaps you could dine with me?"

This hint of opposition brought all Bradsmith's unconquerable spirit bubbling to the surface.

"No, no," he said. "Freddie'll be tickled to death to have you. And, besides, then I shall know you're all right while I'm busy in the office. Come along, old man. I'll take you right in."

If I were conscious, as I was, that the matter had now degenerated into a contest between our wills, quite unconnected with Bradsmith's alleged desire to "hear all my news," it made no difference to the upshot. If Bradsmith wants a thing, he generally gets it. I heard myself giving way.

"Oh, well," I said, "if you're quite sure——"

"Of course I'm sure," he interrupted. "Why, Freddie'd do anything for me."

The thing might have been put more graciously, but this, again, did not affect the issue. Bradsmith caught me once more by the elbow and propelled me down the dark alley in which the patrons of the Corona pit spend so much of their patient lives. It was not so dark, though, that I could not see Bradsmith's name staring out at me (in company with those of Reginald Gooch, the lyric-writer, and Otto Klinck, the composer) from the huge posters which advertised "Oh, Angeline!" At the far end of the alley—furtive and seductive—was the stage door.

NOTHING communicates itself more unmistakably to the atmosphere of a theatre than the achievement of a really big success. You feel it in the air as soon as you approach the building, it grips you by the throat, it tickles your nostrils; if you are at all sensitive, it will even draw ridiculous tears from your eyes. I needed no press-agent to tell me, as Bradsmith flung his body against the swing-doors, that "Oh, Angeline!" was playing to capacity, or that the advance booking was steady for three months ahead. These facts announced themselves as clearly as though Mr. Corbett had been standing there and shouting them out. And, besides, had Bradsmith ever been associated with a failure?

The commissionaire in the doorkeeper's den saluted my guide in a congratulatory manner, and offered him a sheaf of about fifty letters.

"Thanks," said Bradsmith, stuffing them immediately into his pockets. He took a deep breath—savouring once more the success of which no man can really tire—and then he turned back to me.

"Come on," he added. "I'll take you up."

He began mounting the wooden stairs—every sixth step marking a right-angled turn—and at the third turn we were suddenly overwhelmed by a bevy of highly-coloured beauties, with print wrappers over their stage dresses, all rushing down for their next contribution to the audience's delight.

"Oh, Mithter Bradthmith!" they squealed. But Bradsmith passed through them like quicksilver.

"Can't stop, children," he called back. "Now, hurry up, or you'll be late."

This fatherly form of address took all offence from his brusquerie. But as the chorus-ladies melted, with another squeal, round the corner, he added in an explanatory murmur:—

"Those girls always want something."

Then he knocked loudly on a wooden door.

A little, rat-faced man put his head out, recognized my companion, and withdrew it again.

"It's Mr. Bradsmith, sir," I heard him reporting.

There was a hoarse yell from inside.

"Braddy, old boy! Come and have a drink!"

The door was flung open, and revealed Fred Barfield himself. In order the more convincingly to assume the *rôle* of a prince in exile—for it was thus that he was nightly enchanting his admirers—he had attired himself in a pair of very loud check trousers, a pair of elastic-sided boots with white socks, a bright blue coat with exaggerated flounces round the hips, a canary-coloured waistcoat, and a collar and tie such as no human being has ever worn or will ever wear—except on the musical comedy stage. His face was painted the colour of a ripe cornfield, with strange dashes of blue and red in unexpected places, and he wore the celebrated Barfield wig—a mass of tight curls, descending in a peak over his forehead. He looked extremely hot.

We were suddenly overwhelmed by a bevy of highly-coloured beauties, with print wrappers over their stage dresses.

I had always heard, and it is, indeed, almost a canon of fiction, that clowns and comedians are—except when actually at work—the saddest men on earth. Moody, intellectual creatures, they are commonly supposed to spend their off-hours in studying Schopenhauer or tending the sick-beds of their nearest and dearest. Mr. Barfield, however, was clearly tending no sick-bed, nor was it possible to associate him with Schopenhauer. In his own way he was as full of vitality as Bradsmith himself, and he seemed in extraordinarily good spirits.

"Get the glasses, Harry," he called to the rat-faced dresser; and then he seized Bradsmith by the opening of his waistcoat.

"Now, look here, Braddy, old man," he said; "I've got an absolute knock-out for my second entrance, if only you'll speak to Daisy about it and tell her not to be so up-stage. Mind you," he added, as Bradsmith tried to interrupt, "I'm the last fellow to do anything that hurts her part, but it isn't all her show. If I'm to get a big laugh there, she *must* feed me."

His rolling eye made an attempt at this point to attach me as a party to his cause, but, compelling and appealing as it was, I had only the vaguest idea what he was talking about. His technicalities were sheer Greek where I was concerned.

"Plot-stuff's all very well," he continued—again cutting Bradsmith short, "but the audience don't give a hoot for the plot as long as you make 'em laugh. Now this is my idea——"

Here, in order to illustrate his idea, he incautiously let go of Bradsmith's waistcoat, and with this freedom the author's vitality suddenly came out on top.

"We'll have a talk about it, Freddie," he said. "But I've got a date with the boss. I'm late as it is."

"Yes, but——"

"And I want you to look after my friend here"—a parenthetical introduction was shot at us—"until I'm through. You don't mind, do you?"

Hesitating there in the doorway, I felt quite as uncomfortable as I had feared that I should. How should *I* like it if a complete stranger were thrust into my keeping in this unceremonious way, during my few moments of relaxation from an arduous, if highly-paid, job? But I had reckoned without Mr. Barfield's quite exceptional good-nature.

"Come along in," he shouted, darting forward and wringing my hand. "What'll you have? Now, then, Harry; where are those glasses?"

I had some notion of excusing myself from this branch of his hospitality, for I had only just finished my dinner. But it was quite useless. A powerful whisky-and-soda was forced into my hand, and I let it remain there.

"Cigarette?" said Mr. Barfield.

"Oh, thanks, but——"

He had already struck a match, though. It would be churlish to make a fuss about a cigarette. I leant forward to meet the flame, and simultaneously Mr. Barfield jerked it away.

"Oh, Braddy!" he cried. "Just a moment, old man——"

But Bradsmith had slipped off to his appointment. Fred Barfield turned back to me with a really delightful smile.

"These authors!" he said.

CONTEMPT inherited through centuries of tradition was summed up in those two words. But there was another note that I seemed also to detect; an amused pity for a class of being which might be pardoned its notorious weaknesses for the sake of its regretted indispensability in the theatre. In a better world, no doubt, the theatre would do without authors. Meanwhile, if it pleased them to give themselves airs, there was no great harm done. Poor mutts, they could scarcely be blamed for swallowing some of the flattery which their friends flung at them in the newspapers.

These, as I read them, were the thoughts of an actor in a long and successful engagement. But I wondered if the great Fred Barfield had ever waylaid an earlier Bradsmith, as the present Bradsmith had been waylaid on his passage through the West-end streets to-night. . . .

I can hardly have put this speculation into words, for I am certainly not as tactless as all that. Perhaps, then, it was telepathy which caused Mr. Barfield to entertain me during my tenancy of one end of his sofa with a selection of anecdotes from his own past. Or perhaps, again, this was his customary habit with strangers.

Mind you, he didn't give me the feeling that he was conceited. Conceit implies something objectionable, and there was nothing objectionable about Fred Barfield. As Bradsmith had foretold, I liked him and he amused me. He took, it was clear, a passionate interest in himself and every detail connected with this subject, but then which of us doesn't? And which of us could reveal this interest with the charm and simplicity, the utter freedom from pose, which characterized my host at the Corona Theatre? Besides, if a comedian mayn't talk about himself in his own dressing-room, then where may he conduct so necessary a part of his existence?

The stories were liable to frequent interruptions, when the united efforts of the rat-faced dresser and the call-boy drew Mr. Barfield down to his work on the stage. It seemed a point of honour with him—and I have noticed this with other stars, too—to run every entrance as fine as he possibly could; and to counteract this tendency the call-boy and dresser would begin their attempts with a considerable margin of time.

First there would be a double-knock on the door, to which Mr. Barfield paid not the faintest attention. Then a knock and a shout. Then a frenzied shout and a head thrust in through the crack. Then the dresser would begin shuffling his feet. Then the call-boy would come right into the room. Then the dresser would add his vocal entreaties. And finally a mad rush would take place, in which call-boy, dresser, and comedian all left the room like a whirlwind, the second of these characters adding finishing touches to his employer's costume as they all three swept down the stairs.

It was a manner of transacting one's business which must, you would have thought, have led almost immediately to a nervous breakdown; but nothing could have been calmer than the great comedian as he returned each time to my presence. A short, reminiscent chuckle, as he noted in his mind the success of his last scene, and at once he would take up the story that he had been telling me exactly where he had left off. It was the last kind of mental concentration which one would have expected from a man like Fred Barfield, but it came so naturally to him that I was forced to explain it by regarding him as a kind of Jekyll and Hyde. The individual who was making that huge, unseen audience split its sides was one person, and the man who was playing host to me during Bradsmith's absence was another. For neither of them did the intervals of his other incarnation exist.

You will understand, therefore, that an accurate reproduction of the talk which I am going to pass on to you would include an almost constant series of startling and violent interruptions. But as I have more consideration for your nerves than Mr. Barfield had either for his own or for mine, I prefer to telescope the whole thing into a more or less continuous narrative. More realistic treatment would not be without interest, but it would hardly be worth the strain on us both.

SOMEHOW or other, then, Fred Barfield was telling me about his first engagement.

"It was a panto," he said, 'at the old Britannia up in Sheffield. 'The Babes in the Wood.' We rehearsed four weeks and played for three—twice daily, of course—and by the time I'd paid for my digs, and the agent's fees, and the fines—they'd think nothing of fining you in those days, and of course, being a beginner, I was always doing something I shouldn't—by the time I'd done all that, I say, I was exactly three-and-sixpence out on the wrong side. Still, it was all experience, you know. And after all, one thing leads to another——"

Here Mr. Barfield gazed round on his comfortable, if constricted, quarters, and immediately resumed.

"I wouldn't like to tell you," he said, "what my part had got to do with the story, and they changed the name of the character so often that I never really knew what I was called. But I dressed with the two robbers—Clark and Jackman, regular old-style comics—and it wasn't *their* fault that I came through it all alive.

"I don't know why they'd got such a down on me. Honestly I don't. But they'd got it into their heads right at the beginning that I was giving myself airs—you know how easy it is to make people think that when you're shy—and when they found I was in the same dressing-room they must have thought the Lord had delivered me into their hands.

"They used to hide my clothes, and pinch my make-up, and imitate the way I talked, and not answer when I spoke to them—yes, and they borrowed money from me, too, though we all knew I'd never see it again. Oh, they gave me hell all right during those Christmas holidays, and they knew I didn't dare complain, because they were bill-toppers—provincial, of course, but still bill-toppers—and I was a miserable beginner without a friend in the company.

"So I stuck it, though I could have murdered the pair of them with pleasure. The first week I tried to please them, the second week I just sulked, and the third week, if anyone had said a kind word to me, I'd have burst into tears. Well, they're dead now—both of them—and I dare say they were only putting me through what they'd been given themselves when they started. They were a tough lot up North in those days, I can tell you.

"But ragging in the dressing-rooms is one thing, and ragging on the stage is another. And that's where I find it a bit hard to forgive and forget. Of course, most of their stuff was the same cross-talk they did on the halls during the rest of the year—and pretty wheezy old stuff it was too. But every now and then they had to remember they were robbers—just in case people should forget it was a pantomime—and it

was then that I was fetched in to sort of link 'em on to the rest of the plot.

"I rather think by this time I was called Little Jack Horner — though it may be news to you that he'd anything to do with the Babes in the Wood. But, anyway, I was always bobbing up to ask stupid questions, so that somebody else should answer them and the audience would know how the story was getting along. Then they'd hustle me off, and some other character would give a band-cue, and the story would go west for the next three scenes.

"When we started rehearsing, I had a sort of love-affair—only on the stage, I mean—with Little Red Riding Hood. Oh, yes, she came into it, too. But they cut so much of this that I never knew after we'd opened whether I was supposed to be in love with her or not. And as she didn't know either, you can guess what a puzzle it must have been to the people in front. She was a nice old lady, though. I believe she'd have taken my side if she'd dared; but Clark and Jackman were top dogs in that company, and I couldn't blame her for keeping out of their way.

"An actor should always consider the show before he me right in the eyes," is what

"But I was telling you about my actual scenes with the old brutes. I'd only got two, thank Heaven—one in each half—but they got me so rattled that I used to come off dripping all over and hanging on to the scenery so I shouldn't fall down. They never dreamt of giving me a proper cue, or if one of them ever did, then the other would jump in before I could open my mouth. And yet I had to get those words out somehow. There was the stage-manager standing there in the corner with the book, and if I came off without saying every one of my lines it meant another fine. Clark and Jackman knew it, and that was half the sport to them. Of course, the book was nothing in their lives. They were sent on to gag, and as a matter of fact Jackman couldn't even read."

I must have murmured my sympathy

considers himself. That," he added, staring I have always done."

here, for Mr. Barfield gave a short laugh.

"Oh, well," he said, "I guess it all taught me something. And even if it taught me nothing else, it left me so I've never cut in on another fellow's lines from that day to this. No, sir. I've had good parts and bad parts, I've had laughs I've earned and laughs the other fellow's earned by my feeding him, but I've always played the game, and I hope I always shall."

Mr. Barfield's eyes glistened as he gave utterance to this noble sentiment, and if I hadn't been alone with him I might very easily have burst into applause. It was true that the "game" to which he referred was trivial compared with others that I had heard of. Still, on a matter of principle he had taken a stand which reflected nothing but honour on him. He, Fred Barfield, was top dog now; and yet he held by the lesson which Messrs. Clark and Jackman had unwittingly taught him all those years ago.

"It does you credit," I said; and so infectious is the atmosphere of a star's dressing-room that I heard my voice shaking with what sounded very like emotion.

Fred Barfield, however, waved this suggestion aside.

"It's all in the artiste's point of view, he said. "Now, what do the public come to this theatre to see?"

A very short while ago I should instantly and conscientiously have answered, "You"—that is, provided that Bradsmith were still out of the room; but somehow this didn't seem to fit the comedian's present attitude. I hesitated, and Mr. Barfield supplied me with the solution.

"They come to see the show," he added.

Well, of course they did. I tried hard to read some meaning into these words which could justify the earnest solemnity of the comedian's expression, but the task was beyond me. He might have been arguing a point of advanced politics or economics—not that I should have understood that any better—but for the life of me I couldn't see that his statement was anything but a platitude, and a very obvious one at that.

Still, I did my best.

"The show," I repeated, frowning slightly.

"Yes," said Fred Barfield. "And that's why an actor should always consider the show before he considers himself. That," he added, staring me right in the eyes, "is what I have always done."

One simply had to believe him. It didn't matter that I had seen him in a score of plays, every one of which had been twisted out of all semblance of proportion by his own overpowering self. It didn't matter that at

the beginning of this very interview I had heard him complaining to the author that the leading lady didn't efface herself at one of his entrances. Truth shone from his slightly glossy countenance.

"Quite," I said. "Oh, absolutely."

"You see," he went on, "I've known what it is to have other fellows killing my laughs. I've been through it, and I haven't forgotten."

We were back from the general to the particular, but I was still hypnotized by his tone and manner. And, besides, how could I possibly judge from the front of the house whether a comedian were being funny in a selfish or an altruistic way? These things were known in the profession, but it was enough for me if a comedian were being funny at all. Oh, yes, I entirely believed him.

AND at the next resumption of our dialogue we returned to the history of Messrs. Clark and Jackman.

"Yes," said Fred Barfield, thoughtfully powdering his face, "I remember that first engagement as though it was yesterday. I wasn't brought up to the stage, you know; my people had a business of their own, and they'd always meant me to go into it. I was at a good school, too—won a lot of prizes, what's more—and it was a shock to me when I saw some of the lines in my part. The rhymed stuff, I mean, that these old-fashioned pantos were full of. You needed a pretty strong constitution to ram some of those verses into any kind of metre, and they thought nothing of rhyming words like 'bath' and 'laugh,' or 'scheme' and 'Fairy Queen.' I had one couplet that went:—

"'*It's dark and fearsome here in this wood alone;*
I'm sure I wish I'd never left home.'

There's poetry for you. Eh?"

I joined in Mr. Barfield's laughter, but he cut me short with that well-known movement of one hand which he uses for the same purpose in his professional work. On the stage it always means that a still better joke is just coming, but here it marked a return to the account of his early days.

"But of course," he resumed, "there was no poetry when the comics were on. There never is. And it was in the second of those two scenes I was telling you about—with Clark and Jackman, I mean—that the authors had accidentally given me one good line. I don't say it was new even then, but it was a sure-fire laugh, and as a matter of fact Bradsmith has used practically the same thing in his third act here. That'll show you there wasn't much wrong with it. You can trust old Braddy there.

"It went like this, you see. We were talking about my brother—not that he'd got anything to do with the play, but they had to plant the line somehow—and Clark had to say to me, 'Is your brother a truthful man?' and I had to say, 'Yes.' And then Jackman had to say, 'How do you know your brother's a truthful man?' and I had to say 'Because he stood for Parliament and didn't get in.' That was a big laugh."

Here Mr. Barfield stopped, and seemed to be waiting for me to say something.

"But do you mean that the audience laughed?" I asked. It seemed inexplicable, but then I had never actually been in Sheffield.

"Why, of course they did," said Fred Barfield. "And what's more, they'll laugh at it again in the third act here to-night. Of course, Braddy's changed it to 'uncle' instead of 'brother,' because it comes into a bit of plot. But when Archie Floyd—he's a nice boy; he'll do well one day—when he comes out with it, why, I tell you they fairly yell."

"You mean the audience yell?" I wanted to get it quite clear.

"Lord, yes," said Fred Barfield. "They simply scream."

"With laughter, you mean?"

"Rather. Even at *matinées*."

There could be no hope that I had misunderstood him.

"I see," I said. "Go on."

"Well," continued my host, "at the dress rehearsal of the 'Babes' I got that line over so slick that even the band laughed. And I thought to myself, 'This may be a dud show, and I may have been given the world's worst part, but at least I'm going to get away with *that*.' It carried me right through the evening—yes, even when Jackman put the spirit-gum in my shoes—and I'm not sure I didn't dream of it when I got back to my digs.

"And the next day, walking round all those dirty streets, I tried to think if I couldn't get it over better still. Not altering the words, you know, because I didn't dare do that; but saying it faster, or slower, or changing the emphasis, or putting it across with a different kind of wink. You'd be surprised, I dare say, if you realized what a lot there can be in these little details."

Mr. Barfield's manner was now so impressive that I found myself revising that first shallow judgment which had dissociated him from philosophical research. At this moment he might easily—but for his costume and make-up—have been delivering a lecture on Bergson.

"Oh, I'm sure of it," I murmured. "And

—er—did you find a better way of saying the line ? "

The calm vanished abruptly from the lecturer's face and a look of passion appeared in its stead.

"A fat lot of use it would have been if I had," he answered, fiercely. "Because, do you know what happened on the first night—yes, and at every show right through that three weeks' run ? "

I shook my head. Of course I didn't know.

"I'll tell you, then," said the comedian. "Clark used to say to me, 'Is your brother a truthful man ?' and I said, 'Yes,' and Jackman said, 'How do you know your brother's a truthful man ?' and then, if you please, and before I could make a sound, Clark—yes, *Clark*—would yell out, 'Because he stood for Parliament and didn't get in.' Do you understand ? He pinched the whole speech. He took my one and only laugh right out of my mouth, and I had to stand there and listen to the audience's guffaws. Can you beat it ? "

IT was impossible to beat it. Though the tragedy had occurred when I myself was still at school, and long before the European War, the horror and injustice of it filled me with indignation and disgust. I might, if I had not been under the direct influence of that compelling personality, have found several facts to console me. I might have reminded myself that Clark and Jackman had both passed away, unhonoured and unsung, and that their victim was now permanently established in a West-end theatre, the idol of the masses and the test by which all would-be rivals were appraised. I might have reflected that in the long run Heaven had not let the outrage pass unavenged. But at the moment I considered none of these things. The whole force of an individuality which thought nothing of filling the vast auditorium of the Corona was concentrated on me in a room measuring perhaps ten feet by twelve. I went down before it like a ninepin. I had no earthly chance of doing anything else.

"You don't mean it ! " I gasped ; and for the first time I took a pull at that staggering whisky-and-soda—now warm and flat from its long sojourn in my hand. "It's —it's incredible ! "

Mr. Barfield looked at me in gloomy appreciation of my sympathy.

"It's true," he said.

"But couldn't you do anything ? " I asked. "Wasn't there anyone to take your side ? "

The great comedian suddenly smiled.

"You bet there was nobody to take my side," he said. "There never is when you're up against bill-toppers like that. And yet—well, I did have one shot at getting my own back. One shot."

And he smiled again.

I scented the happy ending for which the story positively shrieked, and hastened to draw it from him.

"What was it ? " I asked. "What did you do ? "

"It was on the last night," said Fred Barfield. "I knew nothing could make Clark and Jackman hate me more than they did, and I knew the management weren't going to engage me again—or, if they were, well, next Christmas seemed a very long way off. Perhaps that sounds as if I'd thought it out beforehand ; but I hadn't. Not consciously, anyhow. No, it came to me on the spur of the moment—like some of my best gags do still. And—"

There was an agonizing interruption here, while a young man—I gathered that he was the nice boy, Archie Floyd, of whom I had already heard—put his head in at the door and discussed something so highly technical that I could get no meaning out of it at all. For a musical-comedy actor he struck me as a trifle subdued ; but then anyone might seem subdued who burnt his little candle in the great blaze of Fred Barfield's sun. I waited patiently, and presently, with a brief "Thanks awfully, Freddie," he withdrew.

I turned back to my host.

"You were telling me," I reminded him, "about the way you got back at Clark and Jackman."

"Eh ? " said the comedian, vaguely.

"At the last performance of 'The Babes in the Wood.' "

"Oh, yes ! " He picked up the thread this time; and went on. "Well, you see, it all came to me in a flash. If they could jump in on me, then for once, anyhow, I'd jolly well jump in on them. And so I made up my mind—we'd started the scene by then—that when Clark said, 'Is your brother a truthful man ?' I'd go right to the laugh, and say : 'Yes. Because he stood for Parliament, and didn't get in.' It wasn't nearly so good, of course, but if it got as much as a snigger, the snigger would be all mine. It would do Clark out of his laugh, anyway."

To me there seemed little to choose between the alternative versions from the point of view of imbecility ; but I waited anxiously for the comedian's next words.

"Well ? " I encouraged him.

He shook his head sadly. The happy ending seemed suddenly to fade into the distance and expire.

"Do you mean," I asked, "that you never said it ? "

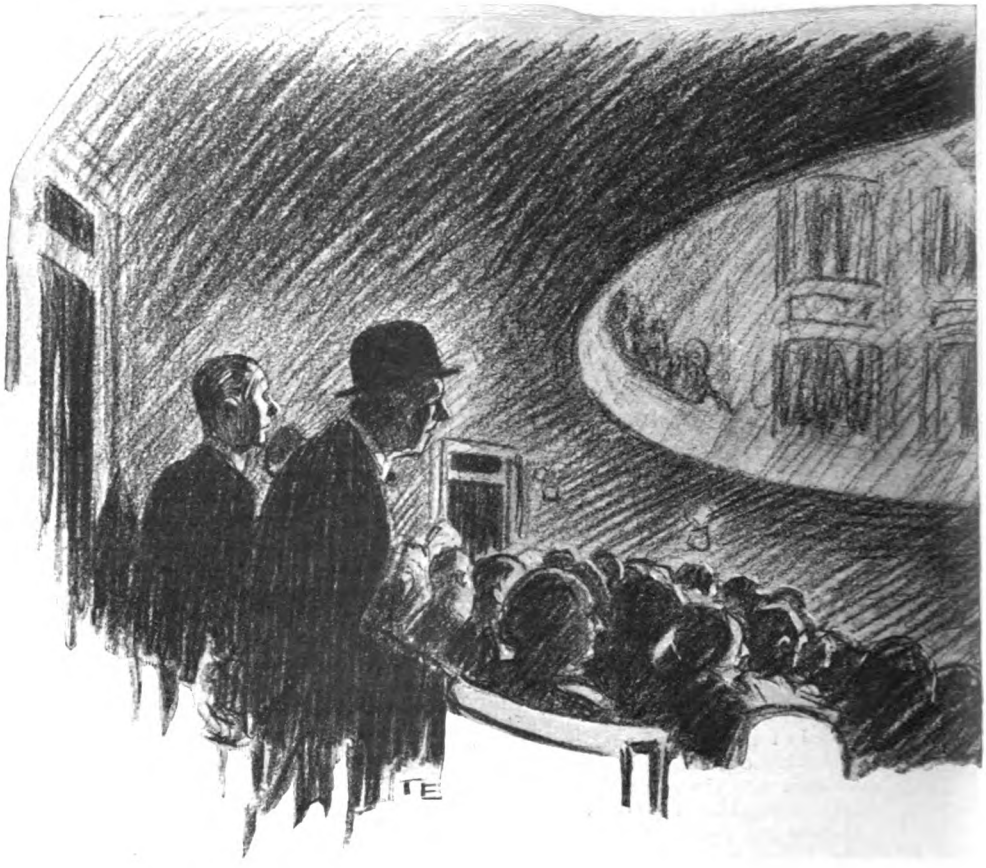
He shook his head again.

"I started in to say it," he answered, "but I never finished. I tell you, old man, you couldn't get past real old-fashioned comics like them. Clark said, 'Is your brother a truthful man?' and I took a deep breath and said, 'Yes——' And that was just as far as I got.

"It was Jackman, the fellow who couldn't read, who saved the team. He must have guessed what I was up to from the way I looked at them, and before you could say 'Knife' he'd jumped right in again.

"'Oh, is he?' he said. 'Then he can't be your brother.'

"Clark was mad, and so was I. But if you'll believe me, it got the biggest laugh of the whole run."



We stood there side by side, leaning on the wooden partition behind the last

AT this moment, as I was still feeling a little disappointment with both the climax and the point of the story, we were again set on by the call-boy and the rat-faced dresser, and the great Fred Barfield was again hustled down on to the stage. A few seconds later my old friend Bradsmith put his head cautiously round the door.

"Alone?" he asked. "Well, come along quickly. I don't want Freddie to catch me."

I felt slightly discourteous towards my absent host, but I realized that I must do as I was told. As Bradsmith preceded me along the mysterious corridors I heard him humming in a jaunty manner which betokened—or so I imagined—a successful issue to his interview with Mr. Corbett. And then, at a dirty iron door, he suddenly stopped.

"I just want to watch a bit of the show from the front," he said. "You don't mind, do you?"

"Of course not," I said—inevitably.

So Bradsmith pushed the door open, and we emerged into a more luxurious corridor.

"This way," he whispered, bounding up a flight of carpeted stairs. I hurried after him, and we found ourselves at the back of

row of seats. The house was absolutely packed

the dress-circle. The big stage, set for the eternal third-act supper scene, was flooded with light, and among those present on it were Fred Barfield and Archie Floyd.

"'Sh!" said Bradsmith, warningly, though I hadn't made a sound. We stood there side by side, leaning on the wooden partition behind the last row of seats. The house was absolutely packed.

Archie Floyd was talking to a gentleman in a species of uniform, and Fred Barfield, his back turned to us for the moment, was industriously engaged in one of those silent conversations with six chorus-ladies which the drama so often requires. It was too late to catch on to the plot, but I listened as attentively as I could.

"Oh!" said the man in uniform, in a very loud voice. "You learnt that from your uncle, did you?"

"Yes," said Archie Floyd, while I wondered if my tailor could ever turn me out like that, and how I should feel if he did. "From my uncle."

"Oh!" said the man in uniform. "And is your uncle a truthful man?"

"Certainly," said Archie Floyd.

"How do you know," demanded the man in uniform, "that your uncle's a truthful man?"

I saw Archie Floyd draw breath for his reply, but before he could utter a sound Fred Barfield — the great Fred—turned suddenly round, and had taken the centre of the stage.

"How does he know?" he asked, leering at us all. "Why, because he stood for Parliament and didn't get in."

The laughter converged in a wild roar from every part of the house. But in the darkness by my side I heard Bradsmith—the successful Bradsmith—grinding his teeth.

"Gosh!" he said, thumping the wooden partition in his baffled rage. "*He's pinched that line again!*"

Then he crushed his hat over his eyes and fled from the theatre—and me—like a man possessed.

I HAVE not seen him since, and he has still not heard "all my news." He is a busy man, of course, and it was only a couple of days later that I read in my newspaper that he had sailed for America. But one saying of his still lurks in my memory, even after all the turmoil and confusion of that extraordinary evening.

"It's a ghastly profession," was what Bradsmith had said. And it occurs to me that Bradsmith was right.

THE STORY OF CAPTAIN HALIBUT

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

I.

ILLUSTRATED BY LEO BATES

AN American told me this in the lounge of the Miramare at Genoa. I have redressed the story, but it is pretty much as he told it:—

It was on the run from Grasse to San Remo, in one of the P.L.M. touring cars, that I met an Australian, a man of fifty or so and wealthy; he told me that both by word of mouth, by manner, and by dress, yet he was not offensive. Apropos of I forget what, he told me that at one time he had been in the habit of carrying large sums of money about with him in the form of notes and securities, but of late he had altered his practice in this respect.

Asked me did I know Bordighera, just beyond the Italian frontier.

"It's mostly an English colony," said the Australian; "you couldn't fire a gun down the High Street without hitting a retired British Army man—ten to one a general. Talking of keeping money in the bank and not in one's pocket reminds me of Bordighera, the last place you'd ever dream of meeting a crook of any standing, for there's not much money there, nothing but the air and scenery and a two-cent casino that the police raid every time the gambling table is opened.

"Well, it was in this home of high respectability and the retired British Army that I met Captain Halibut, and if you don't know who Captain Halibut is, you're lucky—or maybe unlucky, for the chap was a liberal education in pathological psychology, and a liberal education is worth paying for.

"It was on the Ventimille-Bordighera road that I met the Cap. first. I was crossing near the entrance to the Dolce Aqua Valley and was near run down by a motor-car—would have been but for Halibut. He pulled me out of the way, risking his own life in doing so, and then walked off without waiting for thanks after telling me I was a damn fool to cross an Italian high road reading a newspaper.

"Next day I met him in Manzoni's wine shop and stood him a cocktail; after that we grew friendly and he'd come up to my hotel to smoke a pipe and we'd go together to Damilano's and the Casino, and never once did either of us refer to the motor-car business. He'd put me under a debt to him, you see, and so chose to say nothing more about it, and I met him half-way, for he was one of those men who don't stand being thanked. But, as I was saying, we grew very thick, good pals, and we told our affairs to each other; at least that is how it seemed to me, for looking back afterwards it seemed more like that I'd done most of the talking and he the listening. As a matter of fact, I'd told him everything about myself, how I'd gone to California without a mag, how I'd made my pile, how I'd invested it; and he took it all in, giving nothing out about himself except the fact that he was travelling for the good of his health and that his name was Halibut.

"But all that while he was sizing me up and taking my character in and measuring it, and getting to know it and to understand

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that I was a safe man to trust, seeing what he'd done for me in saving my life.

"Then one day he made his big disclosure. Told me he was a crook. Said he reckoned he was the Prince of Crooks, and that he was engineering at that very moment a deal—that's what he called it—that would be the talk of Europe if it came off.

"I'll never forget the morning he told me all this, sitting under the plane trees on the Strada Romana; told me it just as though he were talking of the dancing at Damilano's or the state of the weather; and I'll never forget the recognition of the fact that I wasn't shocked or frightened by what he said, only interested as though he'd suddenly grown horns or kicked off his boot to show he'd a cloven hoof—you know what I mean. If I had found he was a confidence trick man or a petty thief, I'd have fired him right there and gone home and washed my hands; but the way he put the crown of the kingdom of crookery on his head, so to say, was so convincing that I didn't rise up and go off, I just sat there and listened.

"He told me right out that I had nothing to fear owing to my acquaintance with him, but that it would be just as well for us not to meet again, as the *coup* he was planning was to come off soon and he didn't want the slightest chance of any suspicion falling on me. 'Up to this,' said he, 'it is all right for you, but after this it is better that we

I asked him straight out what the *coup* was he proposed undertaking, and he answered that he proposed to raid Monte Carlo.

shouldn't be seen together, in case anything happens to me, and I've told you my position and all about me, so that you'll understand that it's better for us to avoid each other.'

"Now that was straight dealing, and I told him so. You wouldn't know unless you'd experienced it what it means to find that a crook has put his trust in you and dealt well by you. I reckon it's a sort of pride that tells you you must be better than most men, to be treated like that by a scalliwag that's out to plunder the world.

"I asked him straight out what the *coup* was he proposed undertaking, and he answered me without batting an eyelid that he proposed to raid Monte Carlo.

"Get me? He proposed, with the help of a dozen other men, to hold up Monte!

"THE thing seemed so outrageously absurd that I thought for the moment he was joking. Then I pointed out that there was no gold at the Casino now, only chips and bank-notes, but he said the raid had nothing to do with the Casino. He pointed out to me that Monte Carlo was the dead centre of what he called the jewellery world, that the best and finest jewels of London and Paris found their way to this town, where reckless disregard of the value of money was part of the atmosphere, and that the successful sacking of a single shop like Gomper's or Soriano's or Lecomte's would be an enterprise worth undertaking it itself.

"'Just so,' said I, 'and so would the sacking of any jeweller's in the Rue de la Paix in Paris; it's not the sacking but the getting away with the goods—that's where the bother lies, for if you had the whole of the jewellery of Monte Carlo in a furniture van, where'd you take it to?'

"'It's so easy to ask questions like that,' said he, 'but I don't blame you. It's just that very proposition which has prevented this deal being carried out before now. During the time that the Casino played with gold instead of paper and chips, several men in a big way nosed round this project—there was Ambrose and others of whom you have never heard, but they were all headed off by that suggestion, they couldn't see how the goods could be got away; they hadn't vision enough and they hadn't the means at their disposal which we have to-day. Now, try and get your wits to work on it and, taking modern conditions into account, tell me how, if you had a couple of sacks full of jewels, say in the Place des Moulins of Monte Carlo, you would get them away, the police being held up, say, for half an hour.'

"'Under modern conditions?' I said. 'Well, how about a fast motor-car with a changeable number plate?'

"'No use,' said he; 'every car would be stopped, number plate or no; try again.'

"'An aeroplane or sea-plane.'

"'You would be caught just as surely; there is nothing so demonstrative as an aeroplane; it's like a brass band for attracting attention. No, an aeroplane is no use. Try again.'

"'It's no use,' I said. 'I can't think of any other way. I believe there is no other way, and that the whole proposition is absurd, and likely to come down with a crash on any fool who ventures his life and his liberty trying it out.'

"'How about a submarine,' asked he, 'an old Spanish submarine bought cheap from the Spanish navy yards to break up into old iron, but taken instead to an island in the Ægean and tinkered over and furbished up till she's trustable and seaworthy?'

"'Oh, a submarine!' said I.

"'Yes, a submarine, flying the Spanish flag and putting into the harbour of Monaco, where no questions would be asked or papers wanted.'

"'Are you sure of that?' I asked him.

"'Certain,' said he. 'Warships are not questioned.'

"'I see. Well, go on. You and the men who are working with you put into the harbour of Monaco in a submarine flying the Spanish flag. You would, of course, be disguised as a Spanish officer and your crew as Spaniards.'

"'No.'

"'How so?'

"'They would not be disguised; they *are* Spaniards, and as for me I can be a Spaniard at will. I can talk the language like a native; I can talk five European languages like a native,' said the amazing crook, 'just as fluently as I am talking English now.'

"'Are you an Englishman?' I asked.

"'No,' he said.

"'What countryman are you?'

"'I don't know. I was born in Paris in the year 1873, that is all I know about myself. But to come back to Monte Carlo. We come into the pleasant little harbour of Monaco under the shadow, so to speak, of the Musée Océanographique, with whose treasures you are no doubt acquainted, but we have not come to steal the statue of the Prince in yachting dress that stands in the hall of the museum, nor the great cuttlefish that swims in the tanks of the aquarium. No, we leave those to M. Richard, the director, and, landing in two parties, twenty men in all, we go to inspect the town of Monte Carlo. Spanish sailors ashore to see the sights. We break up into four parties

of five men in each, each party timed to act synchronously with the others, each party carrying with it several folded sacks.

" ' Let us follow the proceedings of one party, that designed to attack a big magazine of diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds situated near the Casino.

" ' The time chosen is twelve forty-five. At twelve forty-five the shops are empty of customers and the restaurants full; at twelve forty-five our magazine of diamonds is in charge of assistants. I enter with my party, who stand at the door whilst I interrogate the chief assistant behind his counter. I say, " Monsieur, I am a Spanish officer. May I use your telephone to communicate with Nice on some urgent business in connection with my boat? I have been looking for a telephone office, but cannot find one.'

" ' He says, " Certainly, monsieur," and I am taken to the telephone. I smash it, and at the signal my men by the door come forward with their automatic pistols held, not at the heads of the shop-people—for that might be noticed by any passer-by in the street—but in their hands held before them ready to shoot any resister in the stomach. The shop is held up, the shutters closed, the electric light put on, the assistants bound and gagged, all of which——'

" 'All of which,' said I, ' you could never possibly do in the time you would have and before someone entered the shop.'

" ' The shop is closed,' said he in answer to my objection; ' no customer would want to enter, and the principals are at luncheon; we have a full hour before us. We only want twenty minutes to fill our sacks, and then, leaving the assistants in the back premises bound and gagged, and closing the door of our empty diamond magazine, we take our way back to Monaco, Spanish sailors carrying a couple of sacks filled presumably with onions, for the French have a theory, if not a belief, that the Spaniards live on onions. We find the quay at Monaco. On our heels are coming the other parties with their sacks filled with onions, such onions as they gathered in the garden of Aladdin. We row off to the submarine in two parties, for our boat will not hold more than ten men and the two rowers.'

" ' Supposing,' I put in, ' that any hitch has arisen and the Prince of Monaco's gendarmes come on to the quay, would you shoot? '

" ' Only with blank cartridge,' replied he; ' bluff is the only ammunition in use nowadays in an affair of this sort, on the continent of Europe, anyhow. Killing is too big a risk. You see, they hang or guillotine for killing on the continent of Europe; that, or else put you in a black hole for fifty years with a crust of mouldy bread a day.' "

II.

THE Australian broke off and sat silent for a moment contemplating Gaudron on its peak.

The road from Grasse to Le Bar and Le Bar by the Grand Corniche to the Italian frontier shows one many amazing sights, but none to equal Gaudron, that crag town perched in the sky like an eagle's nest on the point of a peak thousands of feet above the Gorges du Loup. The people who built it chose that site because they wanted to get out of the way of robbers—the Australian volunteered this information with a little laugh that I remembered afterwards. Then he went on.

" Well, there we sat under the plane trees, this chap telling me of his contemplated raid on Monte as though he were talking of his last girl or last Sunday's sermon at the Anglican church, and putting up that stuff about shooting being a bad policy, so to speak, in an affair such as he was talking of.

" I said to him, ' That's all very well, but suppose the gendarmes begin to shoot first? '

" ' No matter if they do,' says he, ' you've just not got to reply. They can only kill you. A clean death compared to what would happen if you opened fire and did one in and didn't escape.'

" I let it go at that and he went on. ' Well, suppose,' said he, ' that our little affair is a success as far as the quay of Monaco Harbour, that our four landing parties have returned with their sacks full of plunder, and that they are putting off for the submarine; suppose they are on board with the stuff and the moorings cast off and the engines whacking up. If it was an ordinary boat all that would be no use, we should be in the net of wireless. Every ship with a wireless installation would be an eye, and the Mediterranean is full of eyes like that, what with the boats of the Messageries Line and the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland, the P. and O., the N.G.I., the La Veloce and Italia, and a lot of others. But the boat we are using is not an ordinary boat, but a submarine, and outside Monaco Harbour we dive and steer east. We come up after dark unseen as a fish, we go on day by day making east, we pass Sicily—making the Straits in the early morning, we reach Amplos, a little island in the Greek Sea, one of the Cyclades. There we land our treasure; there we have a felucca waiting to take us—where?—ah, there are many places where you can take treasure

to be dealt with—many places; Constantinople, Athens, even Messina. We have agents, or at least friends, in all those places and in others, but no matter about that, the great point—the umbilicus of the whole affair—is Monte Carlo in the principality of Monaco, and once that point has been negotiated, or, to speak more frankly, plundered and the goods got under sea, all the rest is skittles to Mah Jongg.'

"I agreed with him, and then I asked when the show was billed for and where the rest of his company were, and he said he reckoned that if all went well the opening performance ought to take place that day week; the submarine was in a bay close to Porto Fino and the men were on board all but one, his right-hand man, who was delayed in Venice engineering the sale of the submarine when they had done with her.

"They didn't seem to waste anything, that syndicate, time nor energy, nor old metal, and I said so and he agreed.

"Then he got up and said he must say good-bye to me and that it would be better for my health if I didn't notice him when we passed in the street or met in a bar, and off he went leaving me sitting there under the plane trees of the Strada Romana, sorry he was gone.

"I RECKONED in opening his mind and heart to me he had relieved his feelings, knowing it was safe, since I owed my life to him, and I wished he'd gone on relieving them some more, for I could have sat another hour listening to him and putting all he was telling me into pictures. The fellows with the sacks on their shoulders and the sacks filled with jewels, like chaps in the Arabian Nights, the getting away with the submarine and its sailing down past Sicily, only rising at night to show itself to the moon, the landing of the stuff in that Greek island and the bartering over the selling of it with all sorts of Levantine Jews and Turks and Lord knows what all.

"Yes, I could see all that clearly, and I almost wished I was on it. I'd never struck any proposition that tickled me like this one, and if Halibut had come back and said, 'Join in and come along as cook an' bottle-washer for ten dollars a week and the chance of being hung,' I'm blest if I don't think I wouldn't have risen to it. I reckon that's how men are made in the bed-plates, pirates for all their respectability, just as that car we just passed was a Ford chassis, for all its carriage-built body. I reckon this civilization of ours isn't more than paint—just paint, easy cracked by the sun or washed away by a shower of rain. Anyhow, I'd have joined in with Halibut if he'd given me a lead, but he didn't.

"From that day I saw little of him, passing him in the street once or twice and coming across him once or twice at the Casino, but as the time drew on I began to liven up to the fact that the explosion was near due, and the day he had mentioned as being the likely one I went over to Monte Carlo.

"Getting there, I made over to the harbour and had a look round. There was no submarine in the harbour, unless she was submerged, which, of course, was absurd.

"There was no sign of a Spanish sailor anywhere and no sign of Halibut. He was either a liar or the thing had fizzled out or been postponed. I walked back to Monte Carlo, had luncheon at the Café de Paris, and returned to Bordighera by the afternoon train.

"Something told me that I should never see Halibut again, that he was either a faker or a fool, but the something that told me that was all wrong.

"I must tell you that my room in the hotel where I was staying was on the first floor on the south side. It was a room with two windows opening on a balcony, and the windows had outside latticed shutters, after the Italian style. I used to sleep with the windows open and the shutters closed.

"That night I turned in at eleven, read for ten minutes, and then switched off the lights. I'd have been asleep in another two minutes but for a sound from outside. Someone was tapping on the shutter of the left-hand window.

"I sat up and turned on the light and came to the shutter. The tapping came again. I opened the shutter, and there stood Halibut. He had told me he was a crook, but he hadn't hinted that he was a cracksman.

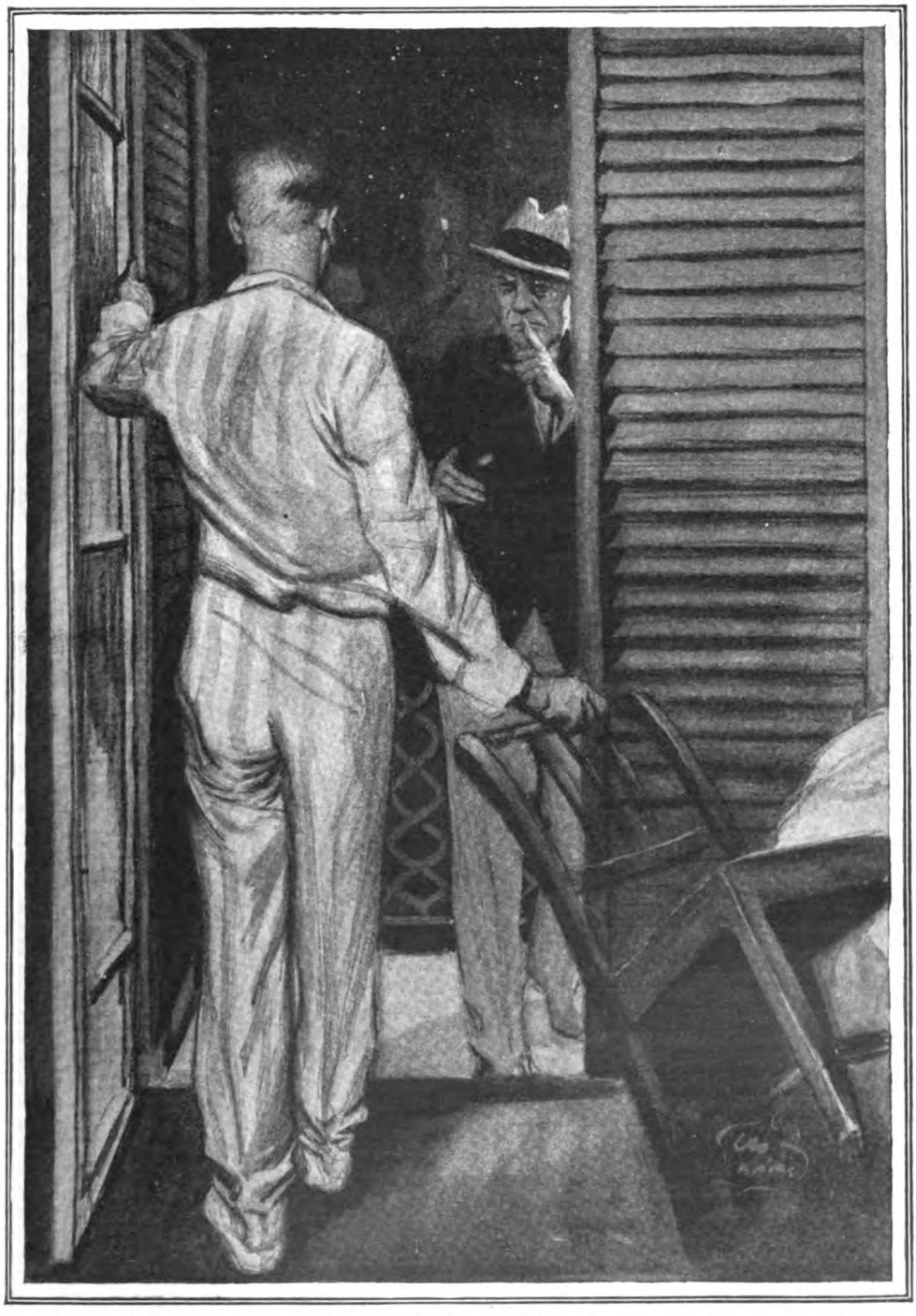
"There was a water-pipe running up the wall of the hotel close to the balcony, and he had come up it silent as a cat, and I reckon pretty swiftly too; no one but an expert could have done it, and there he stood facing me with his finger on his lip, as if we were accomplices, before stepping into the room.

"'Pull the shutter to,' said he, 'and now, if you are a friend, you have an opportunity of showing your quality.'

"He sat down in an armchair as if he were tired out, then pulling himself together he went on whilst I dressed.

"'The whole plan has gone broke,' said he. 'Someone has given the show away. The boat is due up from Savona Harbour to-night, bound for the harbour of Monaco; she'll pass Cap Ampeglio at a quarter-past midnight, lie off Monaco, and come in at daylight, only to be captured.'

"I gave him some whisky and a cigarette and took my seat opposite to him. I



I opened the shutter, and there stood Halibut facing me with his finger on his lip.

couldn't forget he'd saved my life, and, besides, I was intrigued, and I sat watching him whilst he lit up and went on :—

" ' It was a woman gave the show away,' said he. ' Well, there's no use in worrying now it's done, and what I've come about is just to ask your help without any danger to yourself. I've got to get to Ventimiglia and across the border before one in the morning, and I want someone to go to the Cap Ampeglio at twelve.

" ' You know that little old fort nearly opposite the Casino ? Well, I want you to go to it. A boat like a fishing-boat will come along ; when you see it, you will let off two flashes from a flash-light—here it is, you press the button so—that's all you have to do, and you will get an answering flash from the boat. That's all, nothing in it, but it means a lot to us.'

" He put the flash-light on the table.

" ' But the boat,' I said ; ' where's the boat coming from ? '

" ' From the submarine,' said he ; ' she'll be out there now on the surface,' but he ordered me not to look for any signal till twelve.

" ' And when she takes up the signal ? ' I asked.

" ' She'll know the affair is blown upon,' he replied, ' and make off back to where she came from.'

" I didn't like the affair a bit. Common sense told me to give him back his electric torch and show him to the window, but I couldn't do that. The confounded chap had saved my life. Also, there was something about him that made the whole of this criminal proposition on which he was engaged seem more like an adventure in a book than a happening in real life. Also, he had a way with him ; he was a good fellow, and you felt that he'd do the same for you, no matter what you did for him. You know the kind of chap.

" ' Well,' I said, at last, ' I don't mind doing what you say, but what's to become of you while I'm away ? '

" ' Oh,' he said, ' you can go out of the hotel by the front door, but I've got to go the way I came—by the window. Leave me here, and when you've been gone ten minutes or so I'll scramble down from the balcony.'

" ' And if anyone catches you ? ' I asked.

" ' They won't,' said he.

" There it was ; the thing was easy to be done, and I had only to decide on doing it. I sat thinking the matter over.

" I saw that even if he were captured during my absence, it wouldn't involve me. He'd be taken as a burglar visiting my rooms, and I saw that the possession of an electric torch, even if I were caught with it, wouldn't be a criminal matter.

" I looked all round the proposition and couldn't see any harm to myself anywhere. Then, like a fool, like a —— fool, I consented.

III.

" I PUT on my hat and overcoat and took the electric torch.

" I left him sitting in the armchair by the table, lighting another cigarette. He was to wait ten minutes, and then, opening and closing the shutters again, to drop down from the balcony the way he had come.

" I looked back at him before closing the door. He was sitting there as unconcerned as though the place belonged to him. Then I came downstairs.

" There was no one in the hall except the night porter, who had just come on duty. I nodded to him and passed out. I often went out at night for a stroll before going to bed, though rarely so late, and he saw nothing suspicious in the business, and I could come back when I liked without raising suspicion, for people from the Casino would be coming in at any time from half-past twelve to two.

" Outside and in the Strada Romana I turned east, and five minutes later I found myself close to the old fort that overlooks the Casino and the Church of St. Ampeglio. I was too soon. I still had twenty-five minutes to wait, and I took my seat on the fort wall, kicking my heels and watching the flash of Cap Ferrat light, and wondering at my own stupidity in being mixed up in this affair, a kind of night watchman, so to speak, looking after the safety of a band of criminals who deserved hanging, maybe ; imprisonment, certainly."

IV.

THE chap cut short his yarn, for we had reached St. Paul, where there was a twenty minutes' stop to see the old town and the view. When we were on board the car again and started, he went on with his story. The conductor had wanted to redistribute the passengers owing to an increase in the number at St. Paul, but I refused to be parted from my story-teller. I wanted to know what happened next.

" Yes, sir," said he, " a night watchman and signaller for a band of criminals, and yet when I examined the proposition more closely, I came to see that the only fault I had committed in the matter was my act of stupidity in crossing an Italian road reading a newspaper, for if I hadn't done that Halibut wouldn't have saved my life, and if Halibut hadn't saved my life I shouldn't have known him or felt under an obligation to him. As matters stood I was morally bound to help him.

"No, maybe I'm wrong, maybe morals didn't apply to Halibut or any relationship one might imagine for him. Leave morals alone and just let me say I'd have felt like a skunk if I hadn't helped him.

"I'd come to that conclusion when the church clock began to strike the quarter-past, and before it had got half-way through I'd made my signal. I thought I saw an answering flash far out at sea, but couldn't be sure; anyhow, I had done my bit, and, having waited a couple of minutes and given another two flashes, I turned out of the old fort and came back along the Strada Romana to the hotel.

"The night porter was reading an evening paper and the lounge was empty. I went up to my room. Halibut had gone by the way he had come, closing the window after him. I felt satisfied, and, sitting down in an easy chair, I filled a pipe and lit it. I had done my duty and acted as a man; also, I had wiped out a debt. And I had taken part in an adventure which would give me something to think about for many a day.

"I was turning this fact over in my mind when my eye fell on my writing desk. It was lying on the table right opposite to me, and it was open. I had left it shut.

"I got up and went into the bedroom adjoining and turned on the light.

"A solid leather portmanteau at the end of my bed looked all right till I examined it closely and found that it had been cut open at the side.

"I examined it because in it were notes for forty thousand francs and negotiable securities for three thousand pounds and jewellery worth a thousand. They were gone, my passport was gone. Halibut had taken everything of value I possessed.

"All that talk of raiding Monte Carlo was spoof, stuff to intrigue me and tangle me up and give him the run of my rooms whilst I was making signals to nowhere out of gratitude for his having saved my life. I reckon he played the gratitude trick for all it was worth, me having given him the opening gambit by my damn folly in crossing an Italian road reading a newspaper."

"THAT'S the story the Australian told me," finished the American, "and I believe it was true, for I believe he was Halibut himself telling one of his own exploits. I imagine he was a born story-teller for one thing, and a humorist for another. There was some humour in his telling me that yarn—in this way.

"Our car, after leaving St. Paul, took the Grand Corniche; we were bound for San Remo across the Italian border, and having passed through Mentone we began to climb to the frontier line.

"The Customs men on that road always ask for passports, but they never examine them properly, at least in the case of a cargo of char-à-bancs passengers; they just flick the passport books open and glance at the endorsements, and never look at the photos on the inside of the sheet.

"The whole thing is a farce, but it wasn't a farce for me, for when I put my hand in my pocket for my passport, it was gone.

"I was pretty well stunned.

"They made me get out. I produced all sorts of letters and papers I had on me to show my identity, but those jacks-in-office wanted a passport. It mattered nothing to them whether I was honest or not, I was their game. I was a rat among terriers. I was a reason for their existence. I reckon those lazy louts with automatic pistols in their belts and not a decent day's work behind any one of them—I reckon those garlic-stinking frontier loungers had the time of their lives that day over the American without a passport. They would not let me go on, and the char-à-bancs wouldn't wait, so there I was left on the road, and the char-à-bancs hadn't more than got up speed than it struck me like a revolver bullet that I'd been done by the Australian, that he'd stolen my passport, having none of his own, and being, maybe, chased by the French police. It was as clear as paint, and I tried to explain to those Customs fools that they had hold of an innocent man and were letting a big criminal escape them—— Say, did you ever try to explain anything to a Customs man? If you haven't, all I can say is, don't!"

THE MAN WITH THE MULTIPLE MIND

An Interview with HARRY KAHNE, WHOSE BRAIN CAN DO SIX THINGS AT THE SAME TIME

BY

FENN SHERIE

IT is said that Mohammed and Cæsar could, upon occasions, perform two distinct mental operations—such as writing a letter and carrying on a conversation—simultaneously. Not having interviewed either of them I am unable to confirm this. I can, however, vouch for the fact that the present generation has produced a remarkable young man who can make his brain do six different things at the same time—involving, according to the psychologists, no fewer than fourteen separate mental processes.

When I first heard of his existence I was (as the reader may be at present) a little dubious. However, now that I have witnessed his public performance, put him through several private tests and chatted with him regarding his remarkable talents, I am in a position to state the facts.

His name is Harry Kahne, his age is twenty-eight, and his native land is America. He has a charming personality, a nasal accent, and, above all, a wonderful brain.

His demonstrations of multiple mind concentration have to be seen to be believed, but the reader will gather some idea of his remarkable abilities from a careful study of the accompanying photographs with their descriptive captions.

MR. HARRY KAHNE.

Whether he is performing before music-hall audiences or learned professors of psychology, Mr. Kahne has the happy knack of keeping his audiences amused as well as amazed. Even whilst jotting down rows of figures, writing them upside down and backwards, he manages to maintain a steady flow of amusing chatter.

"Will somebody please call out a number?" he asks. "You may call out your age if you like. Ladies may call out the ages of their lady friends."

And whilst he is writing out news-headlines backwards and doing difficult mathematical calculations at the same time, he continues to invite questions from members of the audience, to all of which he has a ready reply.

"Talk to me! Talk to me!" he pleads.

"What is the population of Manchester?" shouts a voice from the back of the hall.

"The population"—he writes two letters and adds a figure—"of Manchester"—he writes two more figures

and another letter—" is seven hundred and thirty thousand five hundred and fifty-one. Somebody else ? Talk to me ! "

" Are you married ? " shouts a girl in the gallery.

" No," he answers, promptly, jotting down a word as he talks ; " it's my work that makes me act like this."

And in his final demonstration of " word-juggling," clearly explained in the photograph on the next page, he maintains the interest by hanging upside down and reciting a poem !

" That boy will go mad," said a woman sitting behind me in the theatre where I first saw Mr. Kahne perform.

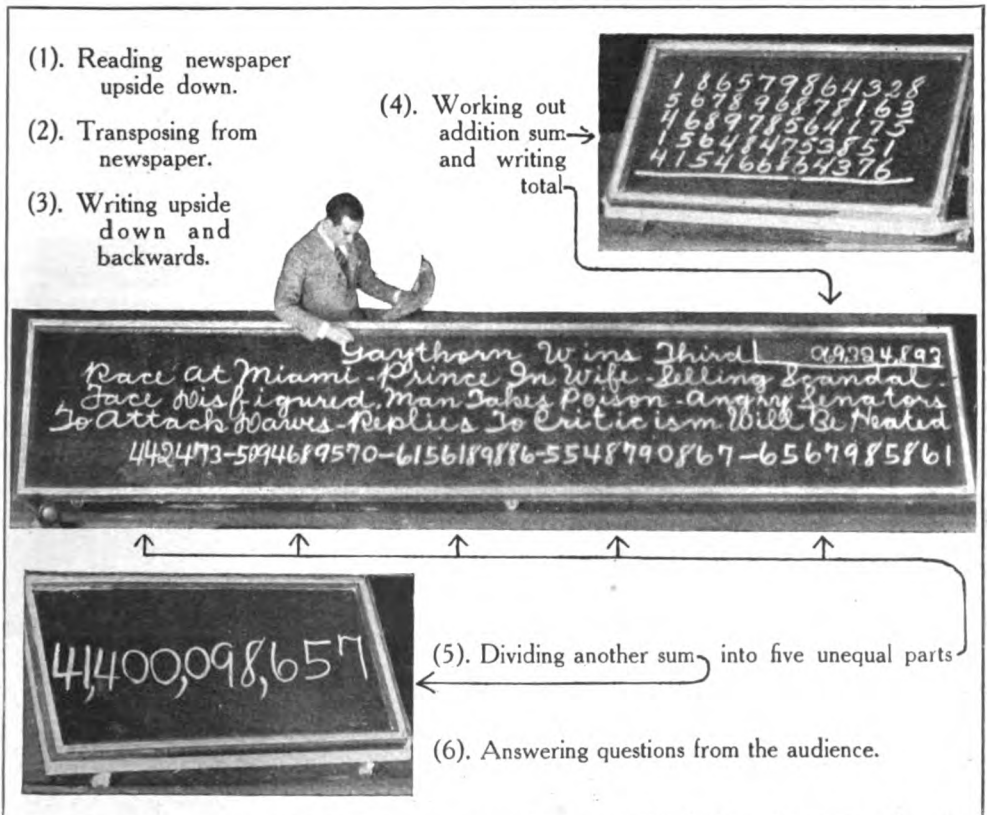
" He is a genius," exclaimed a grey-haired gentleman who looked like a medical man.

" Very wonderful, but he won't live long," he added, shaking his head.

But to talk to Mr. Kahne is to discover that, although he has exceptional abilities, he is not by any means a freak. If he displays genius, it is not of the kind that is akin to madness, but rather of the more creditable variety, generally spoken of as " an infinite capacity for taking pains."

" It is all a matter of development and practice," he told me. " Just as the acrobat or juggler trains muscles and nerves that even an athlete overlooks, so have I trained brain cells which the average mental worker seldom attempts to bring into use."

" But you must admit that you have been endowed with an exceptionally good brain," I said.



Mr. Harry Kahne demonstrating his ability to read, write, invert, add, divide, and converse, all at the same time. The figures on the smaller boards are provided by members of the audience. Those on the larger board are written intermittently by Mr. Kahne whilst he is copying the headlines from a newspaper held upside down. He writes the figures and letters alternately, thus carrying out two distinct mathematical calculations whilst he is performing the four other mental feats, not the least difficult of which is the answering of questions as to the populations of various towns !

DOING SIX THINGS AT ONCE.

"Yes, it is a good brain—call it a 'first-class brain,' if you like—yet there are thousands of other brains in the world just as good as mine. There are thousands of pairs of legs in the world just as good as those of the champion sprinter, but they do not all win races. Mental development is very much like physical development—it is mainly a matter of exercise."

"But to exercise the brain in the way that you do must surely exert a very severe strain upon it?" I ventured.

"So does an athlete exert a very severe strain upon his muscles when he runs a race," replied Mr. Kahne, smiling.

"Agreed," said I, becoming argumentative, "but mental strain is surely far more dangerous than physical exertion?"

"Well, I suppose you're right there," he replied. "When I first started this sort of thing the psychologists and mental specialists declared that I had better get myself measured for a padded cell or a coffin. At that time I was performing only four feats at once, and I think it was the strain of trying to do five that really upset me. Anyhow, at the age of twenty-three all my hair came out. I didn't like that at all. It made me look so ridiculous. But I thought as soon as I mastered the five feats my nerves quietened down and my hair came back again!"

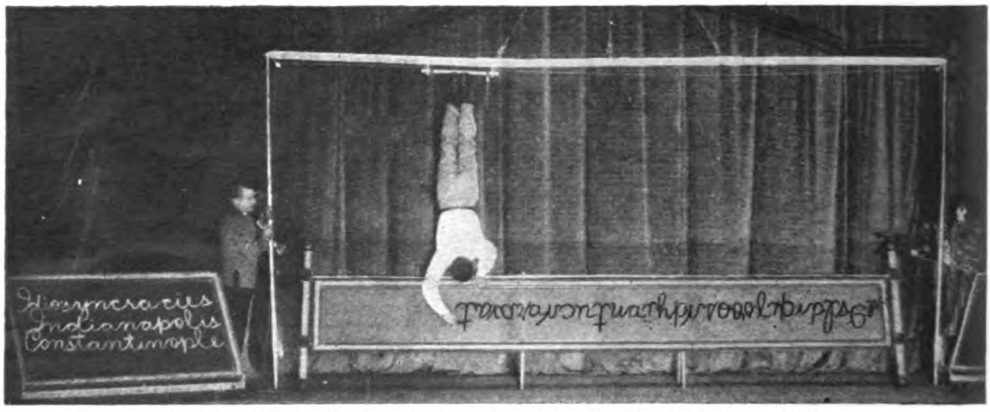
"You do not mean to infer that your present demonstrations are carried out without your feeling any strain?" I said.

"No, sir—I do not," replied Mr. Kahne, emphatically. "The strain is still there, but the worry has gone. You must bear in mind that, apart from the fact that I do six things at once, the words and figures are given me by members of the audience, and the questions they ask range anywhere between baseball and the Einstein theory. So, you see, my performance is practically extemporaneous."

"You have compared your training to that of an athlete," I said. "Does that mean that you have to diet yourself in any way—taking 'brain food' in the form of fish, for example?"

Mr. Kahne laughed.

"Oh, no! I just live naturally and eat what I like. All the same, I have to keep my body fit, or my brain gets tired, and I cannot work well if my stomach is overloaded. But here's an interesting point. Strange though it may seem, I can concentrate better hanging head downwards than



JUGGLING WITH LONG WORDS WHILST RECITING A POEM.

Three long words are suggested by members of the audience and written on the smaller board. Mr. Kahne memorizes them; then, hanging head downwards, he proceeds to jumble them into an apparently meaningless scrawl, at the same time reciting any popular poem requested. A careful examination of the writing—taking every third letter—will reveal that he is in the act of writing "Indianapolis" correctly (as seen from the reader's point of view), "Idiosyncracies" upside down, and "Constantinople" upside down, backwards, and reversed (legible when viewed in a mirror).

it over, and came to the conclusion that the trouble was due to nervous strain—quite a temporary affair, like the stiffness an athlete feels when he starts to train a new set of muscles—and I reckoned that if I kept on practising I should soon get into the way of performing feats without any serious strain at all. So I stuck to it, and when in an upright position. The rush of blood to the head stimulates the brain. Do you know that when people lie awake at night, thinking and worrying, unable to get to sleep, it is often due to a rush of blood to the head—caused by indigestion or something of that sort? If they were to prop themselves up with pillows they

would probably manage to get to sleep without further trouble."

"Tell me," I asked, "what do the psychologists think of your performance?"

"Oh, gosh—don't talk to me about psychologists! They're good fellows and very interesting to talk to, but when a bunch of those scientists get me under observation it generally means that I have to sit up half the night whilst they argue over me. They tell me that the six mental operations I perform simultaneously involve no fewer than fourteen separate processes of the brain. They tabulate these as:—

Hearing questions.
Answering questions.
Reading newspaper.
Transposing what is read.
Transposing spelling.
Writing with right hand.
Writing with left hand.
Writing upside down.
Carrying six different thoughts in mind.
Retaining questions.
Retaining figures for addition.
Retaining figures for division.
Proving previous work.
Controlling physical actions (writing, stooping, walking, etc.).

"Then they start in to measure my head, put me though all kinds of queer psychiatric tests, and usually finish up by asking me how I do it!"

"And you attribute your ability entirely to mind training?" I said. "Your powers are not inherited?"

"Well, my father certainly had a good memory—he spoke sixteen languages—but he displayed no mental abnormality. I certainly did not inherit my ability to do six things at once any more than Cinquevalli inherited his ability to keep eight or nine balls in the air at the same time."

"When did you first discover your ability to direct your mind into several channels of thought simultaneously?"

"At the age of fourteen, when I was at school. In most lessons, excepting mathematics, I was rather backward—not because I hadn't the ability to learn, but because I did not pay attention. I was an absent-minded youth, a day-dreamer—always letting my mind wander, thinking out little mechanical inventions, planning new forms of code writing, or evolving plots for short stories. One day my teacher fired a sudden question at me, and, finding that I was not paying attention, hauled me out for corporal punishment. It was really the feeling of his cane that first turned my thoughts in the direction of multiple mind concentration. I did not want to give up my day-dreams, but, on the other hand, I had a distinct aversion to corporal punishment. So after a while I got into the habit of letting one part of my brain wander into the realms of inventive fancy whilst I kept the other alert for an enfilade fire of questions from the teacher.

Writing with both hands, both feet, and the mouth simultaneously. A demonstration of multiple concentration of both mind and muscle which Mr. Kahne frequently gives before doctors and psychologists. Note: the right hand is writing backwards and reversed, whilst the mouth is writing backwards but correctly.

"One of the tricks with which I used to amuse myself was writing backwards. The first words I tackled were 'Never again.' Why I chose them I don't know—unless I was still thinking of that cane!—but I practised writing them backwards and upside down at every conceivable opportunity. 'N-i-a-g-a r-e-v——'

"'Harry Kahne,' the teacher would shout suddenly, 'go straight ahead from where Jimmy Wilson left off.' Instantly I would jump to my feet and recite my lines of poetry without the slightest hesitation.

"Later, finding that this faculty for writing words backwards whilst keeping my mind occupied in quite a different direction came quite natural to me, I began to entertain my friends at home with a few parlour tricks on similar lines. When I left school I went into the jewellery business, but I continued to practise my mental gymnastics—partly for fun, and partly because I felt that it kept my brain in good trim.

"One day a vaudeville manager happened to see me and asked if I thought I could give a public performance. I said I would try—and that very same evening I appeared at his theatre as deputy for a performer who had failed to put in an appearance. I have been in the show business ever since. When I first appeared I did four things at once.

Now I do six. Maybe, in time, I shall be able to do seven or eight."

"But surely there is quite enough strain in your present demonstration without your wanting to add to it?" I exclaimed.

Mr. Kahne smiled.

"Perhaps you're right," he said. "It is very hard work. In the two shows of ten minutes' duration which I give every evening I calculate that I use up as much mental energy as the average brain worker expends in an eight-hour day. But I soon recover. I spend all the rest of my time in play and relaxation and never allow myself to worry. It's worry that kills—not mental effort. I attribute my clarity of thought not so much to a good memory, but to what I call a good 'forgettery.' In my daily life I erase all unpleasant thoughts from my mind. And on the stage my ability to forget is an equally important asset. Unless I were able to wipe out from my memory the words given me at the first performance, I might easily confuse them with those called out at the second house. Then where should I be?"

I said that I did not know. Then I asked Mr. Kahne if he could explain the method by which he has trained his memory.

"Well, in the first place, most people have a wrong idea of the faculty commonly called memory. Some regard it as a sort of adhesive jelly upon which facts will stick and remain until called for. Others look upon it as a sort of card index where thoughts are stored, to be retrieved at will by pulling out a sort of mental 'tag'—the 'tag' being what is commonly called 'the association of ideas.' But such methods of memorizing are automatic rather than systematic."

"Then what is the secret of remembering several things at a time?" I asked.

"Focus," replied Mr. Kahne promptly. "If you take a camera with a new roll of film and expose it five times at random, you get five blurred images. But if you focus the camera carefully upon a given object and then make the sixth exposure, you get a distinct image. So it is with the brain.

"It is often said that half of us go about with our eyes shut. It would be more correct to say 'with our eyes un-focused.' And the same applies to our ears. We see without observing and we hear without listening. Most people could, if they tried, train their brains to hold five times as many impressions as they do at present. When they are forced to focus their senses, they do so with the greatest ease. For example, if you carry on a conversation in a crowded room there may be several people talking at the same time, yet you will have no difficulty in fixing your attention upon the words of the one person who is talking to you. That is what is generally called concentration."

SOLVING A CROSS-WORD PUZZLE WHILE SUSPENDED HEAD DOWNWARDS.

Mr. Kahne recently performed this feat in response to a challenge, and completed the puzzle correctly in thirteen minutes.

"But that does not explain multiple concentration," I said.

"I am coming to that," answered Mr. Kahne. "Do you play the piano?"

A little startled at the apparent irrelevancy of the question—for even in conversation Mr. Kahne's brain works so rapidly that it is difficult to keep pace with it—I stammered out something to the effect that I strummed a little for my own amusement.

"And have you ever accompanied a vocalist, reading the music from sight?"

I admitted that I had done so.

"Do you realize, then, that you were doing several things at once? You were reading the treble and the base as well as the words of the lyric, listening to the singer, playing with both hands, and occasionally using your feet on the pedals!"

There was no answer to that argument. Mr. Kahne had won his point.

"The trouble with most 'brainy' people," he went on, "is that they usually develop their retentive powers in one direction only. The learned professor who knows the names of all the insects in the world and cannot remember his own; the schoolmaster who knows the dates of the accession of all the Kings and Queens and of every important historical event, yet forgets the date of his

wife's birthday, are common examples of what I call 'one cylinder memories.'"

"But what astonishes me," I said, "is not only the ease with which you retain words and figures, but the rapidity with which you grasp them in the first place."

"Again, that is a matter of practice. I catch words and sentences just as easily and just as firmly as a wicket-keeper catches a ball. When a sentence is hurled at me it sticks as soon as ever I receive it. Sometimes a dozen or more people will be shouting at once, yet I am able to grasp what most of them are calling.

"But here is a curious fact. If somebody calls to me from behind the stage—in other words, from the direction in which my mind is not focused—the words will either make no impression upon my brain at all, or, if they do, they will throw me entirely out of tune and upset my demonstration."

"But are you able to concentrate upon thoughts as well as upon words and figures?" I asked.

"Sure. Give me a piece of paper and I will show you. Now suggest any subject you like and I will write you a sentence upon it."

"The Strand Magazine," I suggested.

"Right," replied Mr. Kahne, and instantly he began to write a string of jumbled letters. "You can talk to me whilst I'm doing this if you like," he said.

"I will leave it to you to do the talking," I said. "Suppose you recite something!"

"Sure. Anything you like."

"Kipling's 'Gunga Din,'" I suggested, naming the first popular poem that came to my mind.

Instantly Mr. Kahne commenced to recite, still writing without a moment's pause, at the steady rate of about one letter per second. He managed somehow to make the finish of the poem coincide with the end of the sentence he was writing.

"'You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din,'" he declaimed, handing me the sheet of paper with a flourish. "Now look. First of all, starting from the first letter on the left, I want you to read every third letter," he said.

I spelt it out aloud.

"'T-h-e-S-t-r-a-n-d-M-a-g-a-z-i-n-' . . ."

"The letter 'e' is upside down," said Mr. Kahne. "Turn the paper over."

I obeyed.

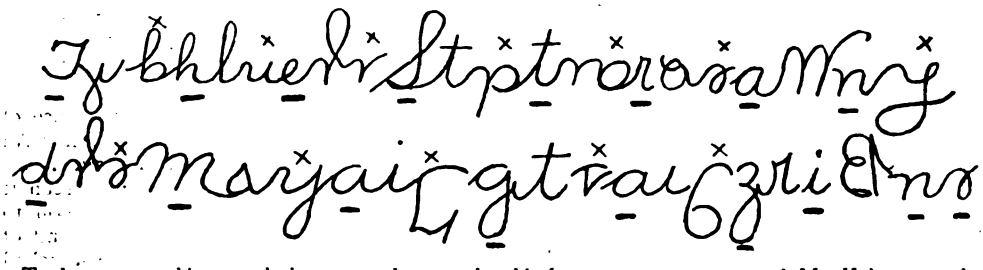
"Now start with the capital 'I' and take every third letter.

"'I-s-T-h-e-L-e-a-d-i-n-g' . . ."

"Now turn the paper over again and you will find, near the end, a letter 'B' written backwards. Read on from there, backwards—or, if you prefer, hold the paper up to the mirror—and you will get the rest of the sentence."

"'B-r-i-t-i-s-h-M-o-n-t-h-l-y,'" I read.

Mr. Kahne had written the letters in one long string from left to right, jumbling their order, turning some upside down and others backwards, yet he had not omitted a single letter or added a superfluous one!



To demonstrate his mental alertness and prove that his feats are not pre-arranged, Mr. Kahne agreed to write a complicated sentence upon any subject whilst reciting a poem. The subject suggested was "The Strand Magazine," and the result is shown above. To read the sentence, first take the letters underlined, then turn the page upside down and read the letters marked with a cross, and, finally, hold the page to a mirror and, commencing with the capital "B," read the remaining letters.

"Well," I said, "Gunga Din may be a better man than you are in some respects, but certainly not in matters of mental gymnastics. Nobody is in the same street with you there!"

"Oh, shucks!" he replied, with picturesque modesty. "You could do the same yourself if you tried."

"Thanks very much," I answered, "but I'd rather not try."

THE DREAM OF AH LUM

By

THOMAS BURKE

ILLUSTRATED BY CYRIL HOLLOWAY

IN the upstairs room of the Tea-House of the Amber Chrysanthemum, Ah Lum was wiping the marble tables for the late afternoon service, and singing as he worked; happily without knowledge of the end to which his song would bring him.

He sang as though his heart were a bird beating its wings against the bars of its cage. He sang of his own country, of the too-much-celebrated porcelain tower and river of sincerity; and though the voice would have driven a professor of the true song into the seventh fury, the passion behind it would have set the rest of the world wondering that one man could carry such misery and live. He went from song to song, a snatch here and a snatch there. Under the overcast sky of the London June he sang of green seas, of house and garden, of prosperous fields, of almond and cherry flower and water-lily, of radiant skies and lanterned midnights and the faint hot smell of city streets at evening, of war and wine and feasts and travails, of man's need of money, of the beauty of his fathers before him. He sang of all those material things of life from which the people of his country have made their poetry.

He sang——

But if you ever knew the Tea-House of the Amber Chrysanthemum, you knew Ah Lum and his noises. Even if you never ate or drank there, you must have seen it if your business led you any afternoon to the wharves and warehouses at the end of the Causeway. You might have reached West India Dock Road in good humour with yourself and the day, and, reaching it, would be conscious of a pervading disquiet; something more than the Eastern hush that hangs in the air of this quarter; something faint and untraceable that clouded your heart and pressed upon it. At first you might imagine that something Asiatic in your Asiatic neighbourhood was being done that should not be done; but as you walked on you would perceive that you were taking this disquiet through the ear and that it came from the far end of the Causeway; and when you had got that far you located it as a voice of lamentation coming from a little place just below the archway. You remember it now? The little faded place, with a bead-curtain to its door, and in its window a few tins of fruit and fish upon a permanent foundation of seaweed; and on the door-posts Chinese ideographs announcing its name

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and business, and murmuring of its excellent appointments for table-games.

It was popular and prosperous. It never invited. Its door was always closed. But it did well among its own people, and the voice of Ah Lum spread news of it to casual white wanderers, who spread the news farther. They liked to think that they only had discovered it; it permitted them the mild swagger of showing it to others, which they did as though they had invented it. Perhaps Hing Pu, its owner, knew something of the little corners of the human heart (most restaurant-keepers do), and, by not inviting, held out a subtle invitation.

Once a wanderer had entered the Amber Chrysanthemum, to discover the mystery of this passion behind closed doors, and had tasted Hing Pu's fried noodles and bean-cake chop suey, he came again with a friend, and the kitchen (and sometimes the back room) held the attention that Ah Lum had first attracted. And Ah Lum, when he wasn't serving, would sit somewhere unseen, with a guitar, and bring something of the colour of his home streets to the bleak faces of his customers.

He was the complete exile. His body was in a strange land, but his heart was set among the long fields and temples of the Middle Kingdom. Here, in this narrow street of little shops and lodging-houses, isolated from the haste and strength of the West, he had around him whiffs and echoes of his home, and from these scraps he built his dreams. He was not remarkable to the eye. Wanderers who had been led by the voice and the place into thinking of glamour and romance and some fantastic figure of a performer were disappointed when they saw a young man in a lounge suit and coloured tie and brown boots serving pots of tea. The clothes did not " go " with the singing, and the set square face did not repeat the beat of strange seas that moved in the voice. But the few who had perception noted that the long eyes held the expression of seeing something beautiful from afar.

OLD Quong Lee, who kept the little store just opposite, noted it. He noted many silly things that others passed, while really important things, like the current price of tea or a week of wet weather, escaped him. He, too, was an exile, but if he had any dreams, he never wailed them to the air. He had not the gift of song, but he had a more expressive gift—the gift of silence; and his physical presence behind the window of his store said Exile as firmly as the voice of his young friend. For they were friends, as philosophers and poets often are. His work done, Ah Lum would call almost every night upon the old man, and talk with him of their home and of the hills where the spring is born, and they would look out upon the grey walls and the grey falling rain, and sigh.

It fell frequently to Quong Lee to explain to casual customers in his shop the noises that came from the tea-house. " It iss a young man," he would say, picking his words one by one, " who singss of hiss country. He iss not happy. He want all time to go away to hiss country. He no can. He no cash. So he singss of hiss country and it makes him not-so sorrow."

And the Englishman, who couldn't understand wanting something and not going for it, would ask: " But can't he save up money, or get someone to ship him out ? "

" Save-up ? Huh ! He have cash—plenty cash. But he playss puck-a-poo. To make more cash quick—see ? All time he play puck-a-poo. All time he never winss. So he no cash. And no friendss."

" Take him a long time to get back that way. Must be a fool—what ? "

And Quong Lee would blink and tie up the purchase. Perhaps he didn't care whether Ah Lum was a fool or not; perhaps he didn't want Ah Lum to go away. Certainly the tea-house didn't, for his singing brought custom, and it was only in his song that he was miserable. In his work he was deft and clean and serious, and he spoke good English. He mixed cheerfully with his fellows, and went to the pictures and the Poplar Hippodrome and the Salvation Army with them; and for long bus-rides round London; and took his daily gamble in puck-a-poo with that zest which the workshop punter brings to the study of the early racing editions. If you had never heard him sing you would have said that he was happy; but his songs betrayed him. Whence he came, nobody knew or was curious to ask. He had arrived among them some ten years ago, from Cardiff, and had taken a job for a month—the job he still held; and through all that time his passion for home was at battle with his passion for gambling. Often luck had been with him for a week, and he had spoken of an increasing fund, of a few more weeks of equal prosperity, and then—home. But, growing impatient, he would take his whole store to a fan-tan room, and at the end of the evening would crawl penniless down the Causeway to the London bed where he must still rest.

But if luck did not serve him, friendship did. At least, it gave him what he had asked for, if that can be called service, though the human heart is so made that it will often cherish the dirty stone picked up in the gutter above the brightest box of marbles

presented by the keeper of the bazaar. In the event, luck was, perhaps, kinder to him than friendship.

It was Fanny Freyne who did it. Fanny liked the Causeway, and bought tea and ginger and lily-root flower there, and sometimes had a meal with friends at Hing Pu's restaurant. There she met Ah Lum, and heard his singing, and laughed at it, and later heard the cause of it. They became casual distant acquaintances. Both were quiet, and a little withdrawn, and while she found interest in his neat appearance and his baby smile and his forlorn condition, and liked his clear deference to herself, he saw her as a marvellous and beautiful creature who had stooped to listen to his tale. One idle afternoon, when few customers were about, he told her the secrets of his heart. He told her of the town on the river where he belonged; how he left it when he was sixteen, and came to England with his father. How he had held always the memory of those scenes, and how, wherever he looked, they were before his eyes. He told her of the coming day for which he lived, when he would go back there and buy a waterside farm and take an agreeable wife who would give him many splendid sons. He told her of the place he would occupy there among the serious and dignified people of his own province.

And Fanny, interested, as all women are, in being taken into the confidence of a young man—even a yellow young man—thought about it all, and wanted to help him. Not that the sorrows of a lowly Chink were any business of hers, or that she could, without drawing unpleasant talk upon herself, do anything for him; it wouldn't have been quite the thing. A Chink, she had been taught, may be all right, but he's still a Chink; just as an Englishman may be all wrong, but is still an Englishman. There was no getting away from the fact. But she had no worries of her own, so it pleased her to dally with a chance of missionary-meddling with other people's affairs, and of pushing the poor benighted creature towards his heart's desire.

So she spoke to her father about it, and he told her that there were societies for that sort of thing—getting poor people home to their own countries—and he'd speak to his boss about it. His boss heard the story, which Fanny's father dressed up with some humour, and said he'd see what he could do about it. He went himself to the Causeway, and got an hour's British amusement from the nasal howling of Ah Lum; and in his turn, touched with the fever of doing something for somebody, he spoke to a man higher up. The man higher up went to see the theatrical exile, and the tale of Ah Lum and his songs made a few chuckles in a dull club smoking-room and lightened the atmosphere of a dull dinner-table. Half-a-dozen of them made a pilgrimage to the restaurant of Hing Pu; and as the Englishman is always most ready to help when he's being amused, it wasn't long before the tale got higher still, and somebody up there said he reckoned they would work it for the fellow somehow.

So they did. Fanny Freyne had been a better missionary than she knew. From her idle interest Ah Lum's sorrow became not only known and popular beyond his narrow Causeway; it became a matter of competition among energetic idlers. It's wonderful how many people you can interest in giving time and service to a cause if you don't ask them to give it. Ah Lum would never have been sent to the home of peace and colour for which he longed if he had gone about begging people to help him. He didn't beg. Unknowingly, he borrowed the successful methods of the publicity agents, and made a song about it, and a joke of himself. His guitar and his voice did what the most necessitous and pathetic "case" could never do.

WITHIN two months of Fanny's first word, she arrived one afternoon at Hing Pu's place in a mild excitement; and when Ah Lum had served her with tea she told him she had news for him.

"I been working for you. It's taken a long time, but I done it. Guess what I done?"

Ah Lum smiled, and said nothing.

"You know all them swells that been coming down here lately? Well, I worked that. Now suppose—suppose you was sailing for China next week. Eh? Out of all this fog and slush. To China. Eh?"

Ah Lum made a long noise like *Ai-eee* and into his eyes came the far-away look.

"All those flowers you told me about. And sunshine every day. And all the old places that you haven't seen for years. Eh? How'd it be?"

Ai-eee! He looked through the window into the Causeway and its tiny shops, and into the window of Quong Lee's store, and up at the sky that held the hue of a wrung dish-cloth. "What iss the good? I never get to China. Never. Ai-eee!"

"That's where you're wrong, son. Wrong. You will get there. Listen. You're going to China next week. Understand? I've worked it. I been telling people about you—them people what have been down here to see you. High-up people. And there's papers coming to-morrow—Government papers that'll take you right home wherever you want to go. They'll come to-morrow. And me or somebody else'll

bring 'em. And next Wednesday you'll be on the boat going home. How's that, now ? Eh ? That make you happy—eh ? "

" Happy ? " For a moment it seemed that he had not followed her words, or was still translating them. Then he folded his hands and beamed, and spoke his thanks. " Oh, yess. O-oh, yess. But—is it true ? Really they're high-up people. You can reckon it as all settled."

" O-oh, miss. It iss—Ai-eee ! " and he finished his thanks in a bubble of Cantonese. His face held nothing of his inward emotion ; only the eyes looked steadily beyond the window as though lifted towards hills and hot skies, while the liquid syllables

It fell frequently to Quong Lee to explain to casual customers in his shop the noises that came from the tea-house.

true that I go to China ? You are making a joke ? After so many years—it does not seem true."

" No, reely. Honest. I've fixed it. I have reely."

" Oh, miss, you are too good. It is wonderful. To be really going to China at last. It iss——"

He turned his face away and unclasped his hands.

" There'll be nothing for you to pay. Those papers'll take you just where you want to go. Next Wednesday, it'll be."

" Oh, miss, you are so good to a nobody. But why me—there are so many who would like to go back to China."

" Just because you're you, I suppose. They liked your songs, those fellers. And poured out of him like an offering of wine before the temple. What he was saying Fanny didn't know, but she was satisfied. Her surprise had come off, and she had made him happy. The smile that he wore about his daily work, the smile that hid the hunger of his heart, was gone ; one does not smile in supreme happiness. In its place was the expression of the lover who sees his love approaching within his reach, while hardly believing that it is truly she. " You are so good, miss, to take this trouble of me. Shall I sing some song ? "

Fanny smiled back at him. There was nobody but themselves in the upstairs room, and it was pleasant to have him make a noise for her alone. He took his guitar and leaned against a table and sang a wilder song than

any she had heard him sing : at once a pæan and a wail, as of wanderers returning from peril and encounter ; and he swayed his body and sang as though possessed of the soul of all who come home after long years. It thrilled her to know that she had been able, by the simple act of " speaking " for him, to move him to this intensity. She hoped nothing would go wrong with the arrangements. It would be awful if, somehow, those papers didn't come, after she had moved him like this. Under the thrill she had a sudden fear that perhaps after all they wouldn't come, and with it a picture of Ah Lum when she broke the news to him. He might do something dreadful ; you never knew with these foreigners. Or perhaps at the last moment the boat wouldn't be able to take him. Or the papers might not be in order. Or the ship might be wrecked on the way out. But it was certain they would come, and everything would be all right. because dad's boss's friend had had a letter from some office saying they were coming. Oh, they were sure to come.

And then the superlative noise that Ah Lum was making brought people to the tea-room, to inquire the cause of it ; and he became swiftly quiet and closed his lips and went about his duties ignoring all facetious questions. Fanny went out, still wondering what he'd do if it happened that she had promised him heaven, and couldn't deliver it.

She did deliver it. The papers came, brought by three of the people concerned in the business who hadn't yet seen the quaint creature whom they had befriended. The quaint creature behaved with becoming quaintness. Hing Pu bowed them upstairs, and then produced Ah Lum and offered him as though he were a dish from the kitchen. Ah Lum folded his hands and bowed, and the high-up friend, who was known and distantly respected for his after-dinner speeches, made a five-minute delivery in that vein, though its fine flavour escaped half his audience. Then he handed over the papers, with minute instructions about the boat's sailing day and its berth at Tilbury, and these were repeated by a young man who had spent some time in the East. As they were handed over, Hing Pu put his hand on them.

" There iss no money in here, sir ? "

" Money ? No—why ? Only passes."

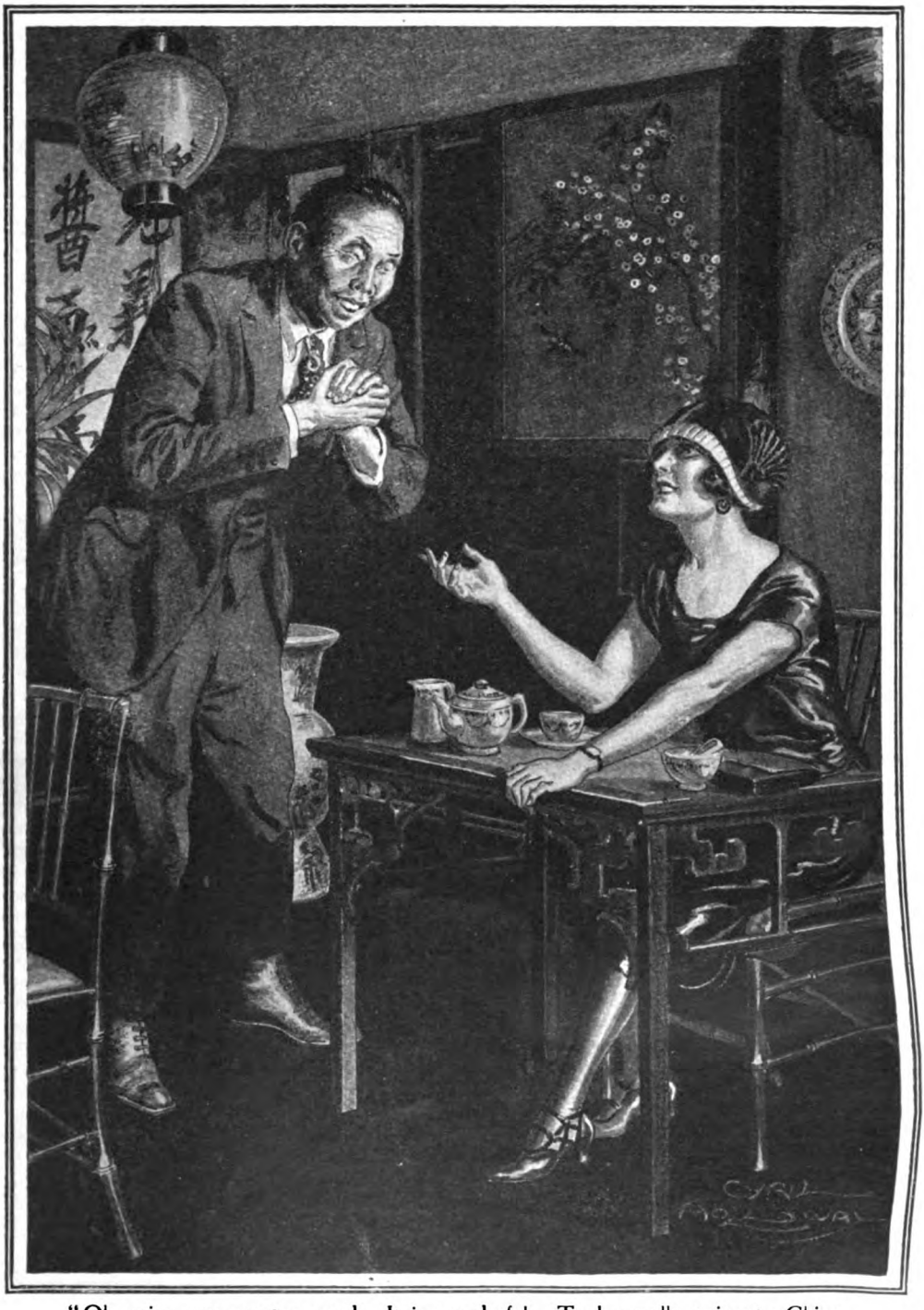
" It iss not safe to give him money. He play with it and lose it."

" Oh ! Well, he might trade those passes. Here—we'll keep these till Wednesday. We'll bring 'em down Wednesday—or get Mr. Hickson to keep them for him. That'll be best—eh ? "

Ah Lum made no comment. He accepted his own weakness and bowed. He did not burst into profuse thanks for their kindness. He said that they were too kind, but his face expressed nothing and seemed to hide no more than the face of a statue. He might have been acknowledging the loan of the evening paper. But Fanny knew better. She knew what simple hot emotions were crowding and beating behind that mask. The long look in the eyes that met hers reported things too deep for words or gestures. He was going home. At last he was going home.

THAT evening the news was all round the quarter, and there were feasts and invitations to feasts. Hing Pu gave one with Ah Lum as the guest of honour. The owner of the house where Ah Lum mostly played puck-a-poo gave one. The place at the corner of Pennyfields gave one. For five days Ah Lum was the centre of many tables, and the subject of all gossip. Always there were comings and goings in these two streets ; men who stayed a month and departed, and came back next year and departed again, while Quong Lee and Hing Pu and the other shopkeepers sat steady year by year. But the one man who most yearned to depart had never had the chance ; he could not pay his passage, and was incompetent to work his passage. Now, after many years, his hope had been achieved ; and those who had heard everlastingly of the river-farm among the hills, and whose afternoon sleep had been worried by that wailing, were perhaps glad to know that they had heard the end of it. Certainly they came forward with ceremonies of departure more fitting to an honoured guest than to one of themselves : they seemed to be celebrating something more than Ah Lum's happiness ; but he was too enfolded in his fortune to perceive anything in their attentions but honest congratulation. Already he seemed withdrawn from Limehouse and Poplar, already half-way towards China ; no longer a feature of the Causeway, but a loiterer who could not be taken into the common run of things ; who could only be entertained. He even stood out of the games of puck-a-poo ; and though Hing Pu advanced him a week's money, he seemed to lose interest in the tables, and played only a game or two.

Right up to the Wednesday evening, when he was to take the train to Tilbury, they crowded him with feasts. Then in the hour of his departure they turned out to depart him, and the Causeway was astir with olive faces and babbling tongues. The doorway to the tea-house was impassable. Fanny was there, and her father ; and the high-up friend, who had nothing better to do that



"Oh, miss, you are too good. It is wonderful. To be really going to China at last. It iss——"

evening, had brought three new friends from the West to see this curious corner they had heard so much about.

In the light mist of the Causeway, before the shuttered shops, they moved without noise back and forth, as one. Trains grumbled across the arch at the end. A cart came through, driving a wedge into the crowd. Quong Lee, wearing still the robes of the monarchy, sat in his window staring at nothing. Somebody unseen started to wail one of Ah Lum's songs, mimicking his noise. There was a smell of dust and sandal-wood; the smell of Ah Lum's home.

THEN the hero appeared at the bottom of the steps leading from the tea-room. He was dressed for his journey in a thick ulster and cloth cap and trousers that were a little too long for him. He carried his belongings in a little blue sack that dangled from his arm. Behind him came Hing Pu. At the door they turned to each other, and nodded a casual farewell. Ah Lum looked at the crowd with vacant eye, and then at the shops and the roofs, giving them, too, farewell. The high-up friend who had brought the papers came forward with them. Ah Lum gave him a bow and one of his wide, slow smiles, and said: "It iss very kind of you. T-hank you." He took the papers and put them in his pocket. "If you escusse me, I will take just a minute to say good-bye to my friend over there." He nodded towards Quong Lee's, pushed through the crowd, giving a word here and there, and entered the shop. The crowd turned again to talk among itself, and Fanny and her dad showed the new gentlemen the inside of the tea-house, and of one or two of the shops on the other side, and expounded commonplaces which were mysteries to them. Then the high-up friend looked at his watch and said: "Look here, he'll never get that train if he don't hurry. Fetch him out. I say—tell him, somebody."

Fanny's father struggled into Quong Lee's shop, and found Quong Lee at the counter. Ah Lum was not there. "Where is he? He'll lose the train if he ain't careful. What's he up to? He ain't gone playing fan-tan, has he, the fool?"

Quong Lee turned to his inner door. "He hass gone into there."

"What for? Call him out. He's only got a minute or two."

"I will see." Quong Lee moved from his stool and floated into the back room. Then he called over his shoulder: "He iss still heah."

"What's he up to?"

"Come and see."

The three gentlemen and Fanny were now in the shop, and they pressed forward, wondering what they were to come and see. Over each other's shoulders they saw Ah Lum flat on the floor. And sticking up from his middle, like an arresting finger, they saw the shining haft of a kris. Quong Lee stooped over him and got up quickly. "He iss dead."

Five people said, "Dead?" "Uh-huh." Five people began sentences that were never finished. "But what——" "Why should ——" "What on earth——" "Who on earth——" "What the devil——" They all turned to Quong Lee then; and the high-up friend got a clear question out: "But what on earth *for?* After we've done all this for him. What *for?*"

"It wass you gentlemen."

"Us?"

"Huh. He hass just told me. You were too kind."

"Told you what? Too kind? How? Gone to all this trouble over him to get him home. And then—— I don't understand it."

"It iss simple. He got no home. He never seen China. Not know China. Not want to know China. He wass born here—in Step-nee. He love England. He love London. And when he know you send him to foreign country—to China—where he got no friend, no home, and not know their ways—he go afraid. He try to run away, but got no place to go. He 'fraid you find him. He cannot go China. He no can. So he die."

"But, dammit—he was always wanting to go back. He said so. Always singing about it, they said. Always unhappy because he couldn't go home."

"Always veh happy here."

"Well, I'm hanged! Then all these songs and that—all this talk about his home and his farm and China—all nothing, eh?"

"Yess-no. He veh happy here, but he like to be same as others, and be sad because he iss far away from his own country."

"I see. He was just a humbug, then?"

Quong Lee blinked. "No, mister. He wass a poet."

THE TEA-LEAF

by

EDGAR JEPSON & ROBERT EUSTACE

ILLUSTRATED BY CONRAD LEIGH

ARTHUR KELSTERN and Hugh Willoughton met in the Turkish bath in Duke Street, St. James's, and rather more than a year later in that Turkish bath they parted. Both of them were bad-tempered men, Kelstern cantankerous and Willoughton violent. It was, indeed, difficult to decide which was the worse-tempered ; and when I found that they had suddenly become friends, I gave that friendship three months. It lasted nearly a year.

When they did quarrel they quarrelled about Kelstern's daughter Ruth. Willoughton fell in love with her and she with him, and they became engaged to be married. Six months later, in spite of the fact that they were plainly very much in love with one another, the engagement was broken off. Neither of them gave any reason for breaking it off. My belief was that Willoughton had given Ruth a taste of his infernal temper and got as good as he gave.

Not that Ruth was at all a Kelstern to look at. Like the members of most of the old Lincolnshire families, descendants of the Vikings and the followers of Canute, one Kelstern is very like another Kelstern, fair-haired, clear-skinned, with light blue eyes and a good bridge to the nose. But Ruth had taken after her mother ; she was dark, with a straight nose, dark-brown eyes of the kind often described as liquid, dark-brown hair, and as kissable lips as ever I saw. She was a proud, self-sufficing, high-spirited girl, with a temper of her own. She needed it to live with that cantankerous old brute Kelstern. Oddly enough, in spite of the fact that he always would try to bully her, she was fond of him ; and I will say for him that he was very fond of her. Probably she was the only creature in the world of whom he was really fond. He was an expert in the application of scientific discoveries to industry ; and she worked with him in his laboratory. He paid her five hundred a year, so that she must have been uncommonly good.

He took the breaking off of the engagement very hard indeed. He would have it that Willoughton had jilted her. Ruth took it hard, too ; her warm colouring lost some of its warmth ; her lips grew less kissable and set in a thinner line. Willoughton's temper grew worse than ever ; he was like a bear with a perpetually sore head. I tried to feel my way with both him and Ruth with a view to help to bring about a reconciliation. To put it mildly, I was rebuffed. Willoughton swore at me ; Ruth flared up and told me not to meddle in matters that didn't concern me. Nevertheless, my strong impression was that they were missing one another badly and would have been glad enough to come together again if their stupid vanity could have let them.

Kelstern did his best to keep Ruth furious with Willoughton. One night I told him—it was no business of mine ; but I never did give a tinker's curse for his temper—that he was a fool to meddle and had much better leave them alone. It made him furious, of course ; he would have it that Willoughton was a dirty hound and a low blackguard—at least those were about the mildest things he said of him. Given his temper and the provocation, nothing less could be expected. Moreover, he was looking a very sick man and depressed.

He took immense trouble to injure

Willoughton. At his clubs, the Athenæum, the Devonshire, and the Savile, he would display considerable ingenuity in bringing the conversation round to him; then he would declare that he was a scoundrel of the meanest type. Of course, it did Willoughton harm, though not nearly as much harm as Kelstern desired, for Willoughton knew his job as few engineers knew it; and it is very hard indeed to do much harm to a man who really knows his job. People have to have him. But of course it did him some harm; and Willoughton knew that Kelstern was doing it. I came across two men who told me that they had given him a friendly hint. That did not improve *his* temper.

An expert in the construction of those ferro-concrete buildings which are rising up all over London, he was as distinguished in his sphere as Kelstern in his. They were alike not only in the matters of brains and bad temper; but I think that their minds worked in very much the same way. At any rate, both of them seemed determined not to change their ordinary course of life because of the breaking off of that engagement.

IT had been the habit of both of them to have a Turkish bath, at the baths in Duke Street, at four in the afternoon on the second and last Tuesday in every month. To that habit they stuck. The fact that they must meet on those Tuesdays did not cause either of them to change his hour of taking his Turkish bath by the twenty minutes which would have given them no more than a passing glimpse of one another. They continued to take it, as they always had, simultaneously. Thick-skinned? They were thick-skinned. Neither of them pretended that he did not see the other; he scowled at him; and he scowled at him most of the time. I know this, for sometimes I had a Turkish bath myself at that hour.

It was about three months after the breaking off of the engagement that they met for the last time at that Turkish bath, and there parted for good.

Kelstern had been looking ill for about six weeks; there was a greyness and a drawn look to his face; and he was losing weight. On the second Tuesday in October he arrived at the bath punctually at four, bringing with him, as was his habit, a thermos flask full of a very delicate China tea. If he thought that he was not perspiring freely enough he would drink it in the hottest room; if he did perspire freely enough, he would drink it after his bath. Willoughton arrived about two minutes later. Kelstern finished undressing and went into the bath a couple of minutes before Willoughton. They stayed in the hot room about the same time; Kelstern went into the hottest room about a minute after Willoughton. Before he went into it he sent for his thermos flask, which he had left in the dressing-room, and took it into the hottest room with him.

As it happened, they were the only two people in the hottest room; and they had not been in it two minutes before the four men in the hot room heard them quarrelling. They heard Kelstern call Willoughton a dirty hound and a low blackguard, among other things, and declare he would do him in yet. Willoughton told him to go to the devil twice. Kelstern went on abusing him, and presently Willoughton fairly shouted: "Oh, shut up, you old fool! Or I'll make you!"

Kelstern did not shut up. About two minutes later Willoughton came out of the hottest room, scowling, walked through the hot room into the shampooing room, and put himself into the hands of one of the shampooers. Two or three minutes after that a man of the name of Helston went into the hottest room and fairly yelled. Kelstern was lying back on a couch, with the blood still flowing from a wound over his heart.

There was a devil of a hullabaloo. The police were called in; Willoughton was arrested. Of course he lost his temper and, protesting furiously that he had had nothing whatever to do with the crime, abused the police. That did not incline them to believe him.

After examining the room and the dead body the detective-inspector in charge of the case came to the conclusion that Kelstern had been stabbed as he was drinking his tea. The thermos flask lay on the floor and some of the tea had evidently been spilt, for some tea-leaves—the tea in the flask must have been carelessly strained off the leaves by the maid who filled it—lay on the floor about the mouth of the empty flask. It looked as if the murderer had taken advantage of Kelstern's drinking his tea to stab him while the flask rather blocked his vision and prevented him from seeing what he would be at.

The case would have been quite plain sailing but for the fact that they could not find the weapon. It had been easy enough for Willoughton to take it into the bath in the towel in which he was draped. But how had he got rid of it? Where had he hidden it? A Turkish bath is no place to hide anything in. It is as bare as an empty barn—if anything barer; and Willoughton had been in the barest part of it. The police searched every part of it—not that there was much point in doing that, for Willoughton had come out of the hottest room and gone through the hot room into the shampooers'

The police were called in; Willoughton was arrested.

room. When Helston started shouting "Murder!" he had rushed back with the shampooers to the hottest room and there he had stayed. Since it was obvious that he had committed the murder, the shampooers and the bathers had kept their eyes on him. They were all of them certain that he had not left them to go to the dressing-room; they would not have allowed him to do so.

It was obvious that he must have carried the weapon into the bath, hidden in the folds of the towel in which he was draped, and brought it away in the folds of that towel. He had laid the towel down beside the couch on which he was being shampooed; and there it still lay when they came to look for it, untouched, with no weapon in it, with no traces of blood on it. There was not much in the fact that it was not stained with blood, since Willoughton could have wiped the knife, or dagger, or whatever weapon he used, on the couch on which Kelstern lay. There were no marks of any such wiping on the couch; but the blood, flowing from the wound, might have covered them up. But why was the weapon not in the towel?

There was no finding that weapon.

Then the doctors who made the autopsy came to the conclusion that the wound had been inflicted by a circular, pointed weapon nearly three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It had penetrated rather more than three inches, and, supposing that its handle was only four inches long, it must have been a sizeable weapon, quite impossible to overlook. The doctors also discovered a further proof of the theory that Kelstern had been drinking tea when he was stabbed. Half-way down the wound they found two halves of

a tea-leaf which had evidently fallen on to Kelstern's body, been driven into the wound, and cut in half by the weapon. Also they discovered that Kelstern was suffering from cancer. This fact was not published in the papers; I heard it at the Devonshire.

Willoughton was brought before the magistrates, and to most people's surprise did not reserve his defence. He went into the witness-box and swore that he had never touched Kelstern, that he had never had anything to touch him with, that he had never taken any weapon into the Turkish bath and so had had no weapon to hide, that he had never even seen any such weapon as the doctors described. He was committed for trial.

The papers were full of the crime; everyone was discussing it; and the question which occupied everyone's mind was: where had Willoughton hidden the weapon? People wrote to the papers to suggest that he had ingeniously put it in some place under everybody's eyes and that it had been overlooked because it was so obvious. Others suggested that, circular and pointed, it must be very like a thick lead-pencil, that it was a thick lead-pencil; and that was why the police had overlooked it in their search. The police had not overlooked any thick lead-pencil; there had been no thick lead-pencil to overlook. They hunted England through—Willoughton did a lot of motoring—to discover the man who had sold him this curious and uncommon weapon. They did not find the man who had sold it to him; they did not find a man who sold such weapons at all. They came to the conclusion that Kelstern had been murdered with a piece of a steel, or iron, rod filed to a point like a pencil.

In spite of the fact that only Willoughton *could* have murdered Kelstern, I could not believe that he had done it. The fact that Kelstern was doing his best to injure him professionally and socially was by no means a strong enough motive. Willoughton was far too intelligent a man not to be very well aware that people do not take much notice of statements to the discredit of a man whom they need to do a job for them; and for the social injury he would care very little. Besides, he might very well injure, or even kill, a man in one of his tantrums; but his was not the kind of bad temper that plans a cold-blooded murder; and if ever a murder had been deliberately planned, Kelstern's had.

I WAS as close a friend as Willoughton had, and I went to visit him in prison. He seemed rather touched by my doing so, and grateful. I learnt that I was the only person who had done so. He was subdued and seemed much gentler. It might last. He discussed the murder readily enough, and naturally with a harassed air. He said quite frankly that he did not expect me, in the circumstances, to believe that he had not committed it; but he had not, and he could not for the life of him conceive who had. I did believe that he had not committed it; there was something in his way of discussing it that wholly convinced me. I told him that I was quite sure that he had not killed Kelstern; and he looked at me as if he did not believe the assurance. But again he looked grateful.

Ruth was grieving for her father; but Willoughton's very dangerous plight to some degree distracted her mind from her loss. A woman can quarrel with a man bitterly without desiring to see him hanged; and Willoughton's chance of escaping hanging was not at all a good one. But she would not believe for a moment that he had murdered her father.

"No; there's nothing in it—nothing whatever," she said, firmly. "If Dad had murdered Hugh I could have understood it. He had reasons—or at any rate he had persuaded himself that he had. But whatever reason had Hugh for murdering Dad? It's all nonsense to suppose that he'd mind Dad's trying all he knew to injure him as much as that. All kinds of people are going about trying to injure other people in that way, but they don't really injure them very much; and Hugh knows that quite well."

"Of course they don't; and Hugh wouldn't really believe that your father was injuring him much," I said. "But you're forgetting his infernal temper."

"No, I'm not," she protested. "He might kill a man in one of his rages on the spur of the moment. But this wasn't the spur of the moment. Whoever did it had worked the whole thing out and came along with the weapon ready."

I had to admit that that was reasonable enough. But who had done it? I pointed out to her that the police had made careful inquiries about everyone in the bath at the time, the shampooers and the people taking their baths, but they had found no evidence whatever that any one of them had at any time had any relations, except that of shampooer, with her father.

"Either it was one of them, or somebody else who just did it and got right away, or there's a catch somewhere," she said, frowning thoughtfully.

"I can't see how there can possibly have been anyone in the bath, except the people who are known to have been there," said I. "In fact, there can't have been."

Then the Crown subpœnaed her as a witness for the prosecution. It seemed rather unnecessary and even a bit queer, for it could have found plenty of evidence of bad blood between the two men without dragging her into it. Plainly it was bent on doing all it knew to prove motive enough. Ruth worked her brain so hard trying to get to the bottom of the business that there came a deep vertical wrinkle just above her right eyebrow that stayed there.

On the morning of the trial I called for her after breakfast to drive her down to the New Bailey. She was pale and looked as if she had had a poor night's rest, and, naturally enough, she seemed to be suffering from an excitement she found hard to control. It was not like her to show any excitement she might be feeling.

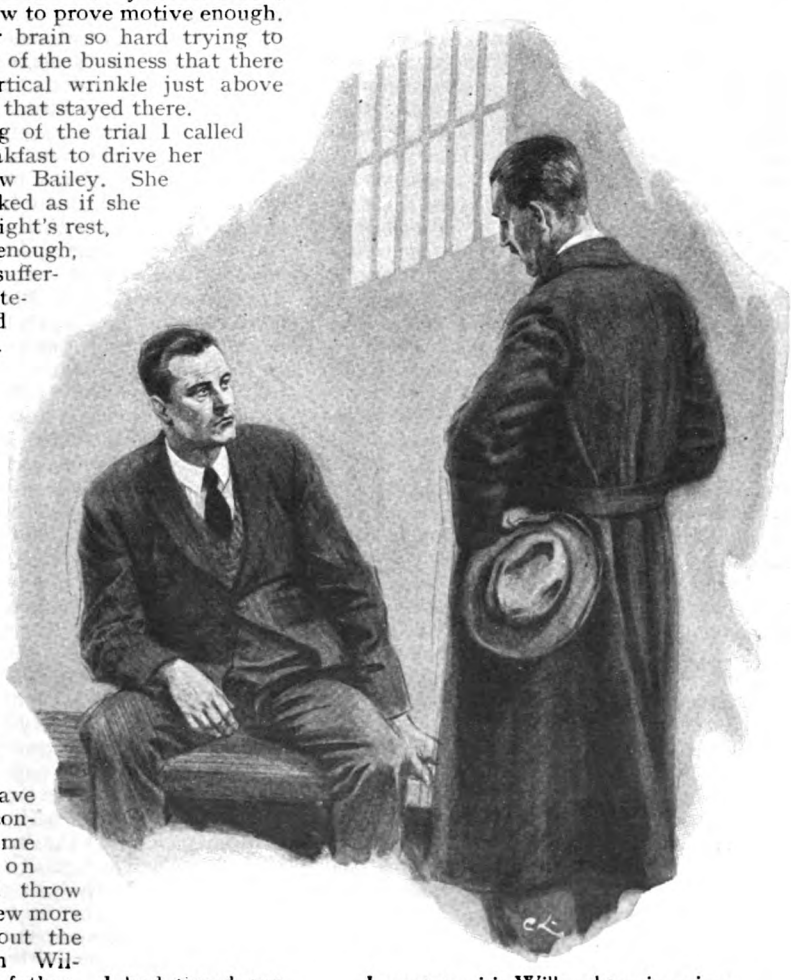
She said in an excited voice: "I think I've got it!" and would say no more.

We had, of course, been in close touch with Willoughton's solicitor, Hamley; and he had kept seats for us just behind him. He wished to have Ruth to hand to consult should some point turn up on which she could throw light, since she knew more than anyone about the relations between Willoughton and her father. I had timed our arrival very well; the jury had just been sworn in. Of course, the court was full of women, the wives of Peers and bookmakers and politicians, most of them overdressed and overscented.

Then the Judge came in; and with his coming the atmosphere of the court became charged with that sense of anxious strain peculiar to trials for murder. It was rather like the atmosphere of a sick room in a case of fatal illness, but worse.

Willoughton came into the dock looking under the weather and very much subdued But he certainly looked dignified, and he said that he was not guilty in a steady enough voice

Greatorex, the leading counsel for the Crown, opened the case for the prosecution. There was no suggestion in his speech that the police had discovered any new fact. He begged the jury not to lay too much stress



I went to visit Willoughton in prison. He seemed rather touched by my doing so, and grateful.

on the fact that the weapon had not been found. He had to, of course.

Then Helston gave evidence of finding that Kelstern had been stabbed, and he and the other three men who had been with him in the hot room gave evidence of the quarrel they had overheard between Willoughton and the dead man, and that Willoughton came out of the hottest room scowling and obviously furious. One of them, a fussy old gentleman of the name of Underwood, declared that it was the bitterest quarrel

he had ever heard. None of the four of them could throw any light on the matter of whether Willoughton was carrying the missing weapon in the folds of the towel in which he was draped; all of them were sure that he had nothing in his hands.

The medical evidence came next. In cross-examining the doctors who had made the autopsy, Hazeldean, Willoughton's counsel, established the fact quite definitely that the missing weapon was of a fair size; that its rounded blade must have been over half an inch in diameter and between three and four inches long. They were of the opinion that to drive a blade of that thickness into the heart a handle of at least four inches in length would be necessary to give a firm enough grip. They agreed that it might very well have been a piece of a steel, or iron, rod sharpened like a pencil. At any rate it was certainly a sizeable weapon, not one to be hidden quickly or to disappear wholly in a Turkish bath. Hazeldean could not shake their evidence about the tea-leaf; they were confident that it had been driven into the wound and cut in half by the blade of the missing weapon, and that that went to show that the wound had been inflicted while Kelstern was drinking his tea.

Detective-Inspector Brackett, who was in charge of the case, was cross-examined at great length about his search for the missing weapon. He made it quite clear that it was nowhere in that Turkish bath, neither in the hot rooms, nor the shampooing room, nor the dressing-rooms, nor the vestibule, nor the office. He had had the plunge bath emptied; he had searched the roofs, though it was practically certain that the skylight above the hot room, not the hottest, had been shut at the time of the crime. In re-examination he scouted the idea of Willoughton's having had an accomplice who had carried away the weapon for him. He had gone into that matter most carefully.

The shampooer stated that Willoughton came to him scowling so savagely that he wondered what had put him into such a bad temper. In cross-examining him, Arbuthnot, Hazeldean's junior, made it clearer than ever that, unless Willoughton had already hidden the weapon in the bare hottest room, it was hidden in the towel. Then he drew from the shampooer the definite statement that Willoughton had set down the towel beside the couch on which he was shampooed; that he had hurried back to the hot rooms in front of the shampooer; that the shampooer had come back from the hot rooms, leaving Willoughton still in them discussing the crime, to find the towel lying just as Willoughton had set it down, with no weapon in it and no trace of blood on it.

Since the inspector had disposed of the possibility that an accomplice had slipped in, taken the weapon from the towel, and slipped out of the bath with it, this evidence really made it clear that the weapon had never left the hottest room.

THEN the prosecution called evidence of the bad terms on which Kelstern and Willoughton had been. Three well-known and influential men told the jury about Kelstern's efforts to prejudice Willoughton in their eyes and the damaging statements he had made about him. One of them had felt it to be his duty to tell Willoughton about this; and Willoughton had been very angry. Arbuthnot, in cross-examining, elicited the fact that any damaging statement that Kelstern made about anyone was considerably discounted by the fact that everyone knew him to be in the highest degree cantankerous.

I noticed that during the end of the cross-examination of the shampooer and during this evidence Ruth had been fidgeting and turning to look impatiently at the entrance to the court, as if she were expecting someone. Then, just as she was summoned to the witness-box, there came in a tall, stooping, grey-headed, grey-bearded man of about sixty, carrying a brown-paper parcel. His face was familiar to me, but I could not place him. He caught her eye and nodded to her. She breathed a sharp sigh of relief, and bent over and handed a letter she had in her hand to Willoughton's solicitor and pointed out the grey-bearded man to him. Then she went quietly to the witness-box.

Hamley read the letter and at once bent over and handed it to Hazeldean and spoke to him. I caught a note of excitement in his hushed voice. Hazeldean read the letter and appeared to grow excited too. Hamley slipped out of his seat and went to the grey-bearded man, who was still standing just inside the door of the porch, and began to talk to him earnestly.

Greatorex began to examine Ruth; and naturally I turned my attention to her. His examination was directed also to show on what bad terms Kelstern and Willoughton had been. Ruth was called on to tell the jury some of Kelstern's actual threats. Then he questioned Ruth about her own relations with Willoughton and the breaking off of the engagement and its infuriating effect on her father. She admitted that he had been very bitter about it, and had told her that he was resolved to do his best to do Willoughton in. I thought that she went out of her way to emphasize this resolve of Kelstern's. It seemed to me likely to prejudice the jury still more against

Willoughton, making them sympathize with a father's righteous indignation, and making yet more obvious that he was a dangerous enemy. Yet she would not admit that her father was right in believing that Willoughton had jilted her.

HAZELDEAN rose to cross-examine Ruth with a wholly confident air. He drew from her the fact that her father had been on excellent terms with Willoughton until the breaking off of the engagement.

Then Hazeldean asked: "Is it a fact that since the breaking off of your engagement the prisoner has more than once begged you to forgive him and renew it?"

"Four times," said Ruth.

"And you refused?"

"Yes," said Ruth. She looked at Willoughton queerly and added: "He wanted a lesson."

The Judge asked: "Did you intend, then, to forgive him ultimately?"

Ruth hesitated; then she rather evaded a direct answer; she scowled frankly at Willoughton, and said: "Oh, well, there was no hurry. He would always marry me if I changed my mind and wanted to."

"And did your father know this?" asked the Judge.

"No. I didn't tell him. I was angry with Mr. Willoughton," Ruth replied.

There was a pause. Then Hazeldean started on a fresh line.

In sympathetic accents he asked: "Is it a fact that your father was suffering from cancer in a painful form?"

"It was beginning to grow very painful," said Ruth, sadly.

"Did he make a will and put all his affairs in order a few days before he died?"

"Three days," said Ruth.

"Did he ever express an intention of committing suicide?"

"He said that he would stick it out for a little while and then end it all," said Ruth. She paused and added: "*And that is what he did do.*"

One might almost say that the court started. I think that everyone in it moved a little, so that there was a kind of rustling murmur.

"Will you tell the Court your reasons for that statement?" said Hazeldean.

Ruth seemed to pull herself together—she was looking very tired—then she began in a quiet, even voice: "I never believed for a moment that Mr. Willoughton murdered my father. If my father had murdered Mr. Willoughton it would have been a different matter. Of course, like everybody else I puzzled over the weapon; what it was and where it had got to. I did not believe that it was a pointed piece of a half-inch steel rod. If anybody had come to the Turkish bath meaning to murder my father and hide the weapon, they wouldn't have used one so big and so difficult to hide, when a hat-pin would have done just as well and could be hidden much more easily. But what puzzled me most was the tea-leaf in the wound. All the other tea-leaves that came out of the flask were lying on the floor. Inspector Brackett told me they were. And I couldn't believe that one tea-leaf had fallen on to my father at the very place above his heart at which the point of the weapon had penetrated the skin and got driven in by it. It was too much of a coincidence for me to swallow. But I got no nearer understanding it than anyone else."

She paused to ask if she might have a glass of water, for she had been up all night and was very tired. It was brought to her.

Then she went on in the same quiet voice: "Of course, I remembered that Dad had talked of putting an end to it; but no one with a wound like that could get up and hide the weapon. So it was impossible that he had committed suicide. Then, the night before last, I dreamt that I went into the laboratory and saw a piece of steel rod, pointed, lying on the table at which my father used to work."

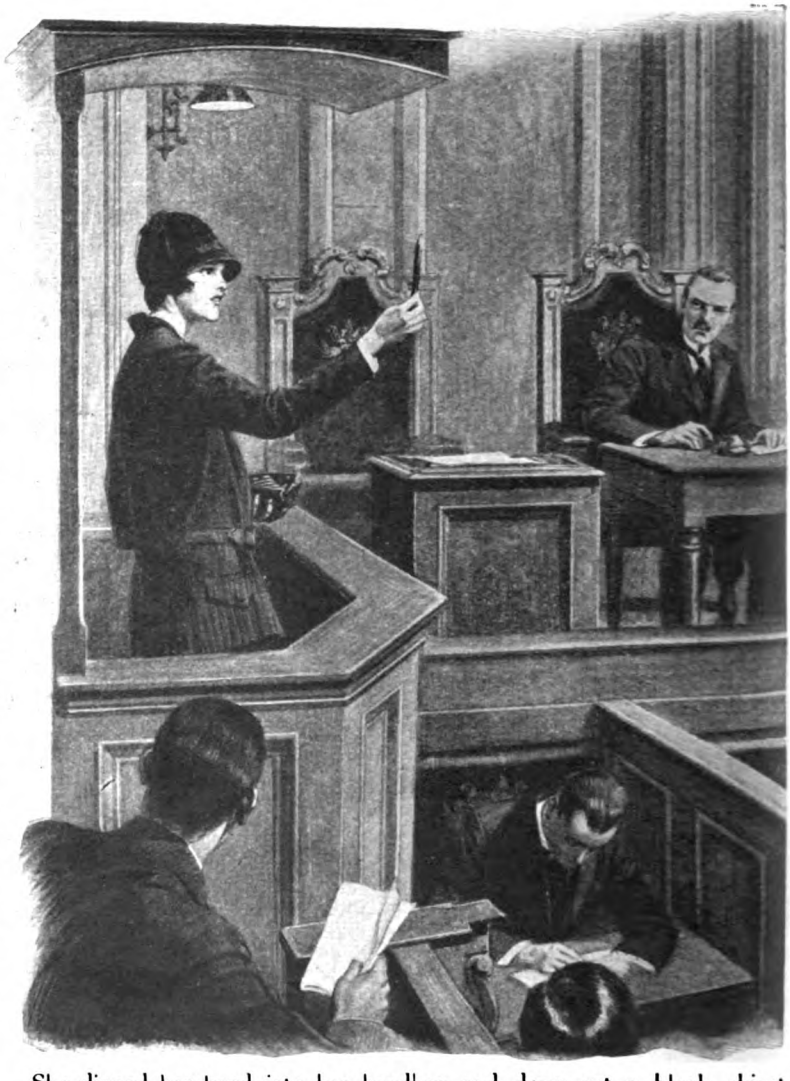
"Dreams!" murmured Greatorex, a trifle pettishly, as if he was not pleased with the way things were going.

"I didn't think much of the dream, of course," Ruth went on. "I had been puzzling about it all so hard for so long that it was only natural to dream about it. But after breakfast I had a sudden feeling that the secret was in the laboratory if I could only find it. I did not attach any importance to the feeling; but it went on growing stronger; and after lunch I went to the laboratory and began to hunt.

"I looked through all the drawers and could find nothing. Then I went round the room looking at everything and into everything, instruments and retorts and tubes and so on. Then I went into the middle of the floor and looked slowly round the room pretty hard. Against the wall, near the door, lying ready to be taken away, was a gas cylinder. I rolled it over to see what gas had been in it and found no label on it."

She paused to look round the court as if claiming its best attention; then she went on: "Now that was very queer, because every gas cylinder must have a label on it—so many gases are dangerous. I turned on the tap of the cylinder and nothing came out of it. It was quite empty. Then I went to the book in which all the things which come in are entered, and found that ten days before Dad died he had had a cylinder

of CO_2 and seven pounds of ice. Also he had had seven pounds of ice every day till the day of his death. It was the ice and the CO_2 together that gave me the idea. CO_2, carbon dioxide, has a very low freezing-point—eighty degrees centigrade—and as it comes out of the cylinder and mixes with the air it turns into very fine snow; and that snow, if you compress it, makes the hardest and toughest ice possible. It flashed on me that Dad could have collected this snow and forced it into a mould and made a weapon that would not only inflict that wound but would evaporate very quickly! Indeed, in that heat you'd have to see the wound inflicted to know what had done it."



She dipped her hand into her handbag and drew out a black object of an inch thick, and held

She paused again to look round the court at about as rapt a lot of faces as any narrator could desire. Then she went on: "I knew that that was what he had done. I knew it for certain. Carbon dioxide ice would make a hard, tough dagger, and it would evaporate quickly in the hottest room of a Turkish bath and leave no smell because it is scentless. So there wouldn't be any weapon. And it explained the tea-leaf, too. Dad had made a carbon dioxide dagger perhaps a week before he used it, perhaps only a day. And he had put it into the thermos flask as soon as he had made it. The thermos flask keeps out the heat as well as the cold, you know. But to make sure that it couldn't melt at all, he kept the flask in ice till he was ready to use the dagger. It's the only way you can explain that tea-leaf. It came out of the flask sticking to the point of the dagger and was driven into the wound!"

She paused again, and one might almost say that the Court heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"But why didn't you go straight to the police with this theory?" asked the Judge.

"But that wouldn't have been any good," she protested quickly. "It was no use my knowing it myself; I had to make other people believe it; I had to find evidence. I began to hunt for it. I felt in my bones

about nine inches long and three-quarters
it up for everyone to see.

that there was some. What I wanted was the mould in which Dad compressed the carbon dioxide snow and made the dagger. I found it ! "

She uttered the words in a tone of triumph and smiled at Willoughton ; then she went on : " At least, I found bits of it. In the box into which we used to throw odds and ends, scraps of material, damaged instruments, and broken test tubes, I found some pieces of vulcanite ; and I saw at once that they were bits of a vulcanite container. I took some wax and rolled it into a rod about the right size, and then I pieced the container together on the outside of it—at least most of it—there are some small pieces missing. It took me nearly all night. But I found the most important bit—*the pointed end !* "

She dipped her hand into her hand-bag and drew out a black object about nine inches long and three-quarters of an inch thick, and held it up for everyone to see.

Someone, without thinking, began to clap ; and there came a storm of applause that drowned the voice of the Clerk calling for order.

When the applause died down, Hazeldean, who never misses the right moment, said : " I have no more questions to ask the witness, my lord," and sat down.

That action seemed to clinch it in my eyes, and I have no doubt it clinched it in the eyes of the jury.

The Judge leant forward and said to Ruth in a rather shocked voice : " Do you expect the jury to believe that a well-known man like your father died in the act of deliberately setting a trap to hang the prisoner ? "

Ruth looked at him, shrugged her shoulders, and said, with a calm acceptance of the facts of human nature one would expect to find only in a much older woman : " Oh, well, Daddy was like that. And he certainly believed he had very good reasons for killing Mr. Willoughton."

There was that in her tone and manner which made it absolutely certain that Kelstern was not only like that, but that he had acted according to his nature.

Greatorex did not re-examine Ruth ; he conferred with Hazeldean. Then Hazeldean rose to open the case for the defence. He said that he would not waste the time of the Court, and that, in view of the fact that Miss Kelstern had solved the problem of

her father's death, he would only call one witness, Professor Mozley.

The grey-headed, grey-bearded, stooping man, who had come to the court so late, went into the witness-box. Of course his face had been familiar to me; I had seen his portrait in the newspapers a dozen times. He still carried the brown-paper parcel.

In answer to Hazeldean's questions he stated that it was possible, not even difficult, to make a weapon of carbon dioxide hard enough and tough enough and sharp enough to inflict such a wound as that which had caused Kelstern's death. The method of making it was to fold a piece of chamois leather into a bag, hold that bag with the left hand, protected by a glove, over the nozzle of a cylinder containing liquid carbon dioxide, and open the valve with the right hand. Carbon dioxide evaporates so quickly that its freezing-point, eighty degrees centigrade, is soon reached; and it solidifies in the chamois-leather bag as a deposit of carbon dioxide snow. Then turn off the gas, spoon that snow into a vulcanite container of the required thickness, and ram it down with a vulcanite plunger into a rod of the required hardness. He added that it was advisable to pack the container in ice while filling it and ramming down the snow. Then put the rod into a thermos flask; and keep it till it is needed.

"And you have made such a rod?" said Hazeldean.

"Yes," said the Professor, cutting the string of the brown-paper parcel. "When Miss Kelstern hauled me out of bed at half-past seven this morning to tell me her discoveries, I perceived at once that she had found the solution of the problem of her father's death, which had puzzled me considerably. I had breakfast quickly and got to work to make such a weapon myself for the satisfaction of the Court. Here it is."

He drew a thermos flask from the brown-paper, unscrewed the top of it, and inverted it. There dropped into his gloved hand a white rod, with a faint sparkle to it, about eight inches long. He held it out for the jury to see, and said:—

"This carbon dioxide ice is the hardest and toughest ice we know of; and I have no doubt that Mr. Kelstern killed himself with a similar rod. The difference between the rod he used and this is that his rod was pointed. I had no pointed vulcanite container; but the container that Miss Kelstern pieced together is pointed. Doubtless Mr. Kelstern had it specially made, probably by Messrs. Hawkins and Spender."

He dropped the rod back into the thermos flask and screwed on the top.

Hazeldean sat down. Greatorex rose.

"With regard to the point of the rod, Professor Mozley, would it remain sharp long enough to pierce the skin in that heat?" he asked.

"In my opinion it would," said the Professor. "I have been considering that point, and bearing in mind the facts that Mr. Kelstern would from his avocation be very deft with his hands, and being a scientific man would know exactly what to do, he would have the rod out of the flask and the point in position in very little more than a second—perhaps less. He would, I think, hold it in his left hand and drive it home by striking the butt of it hard with his right. The whole thing would not take him two seconds. Besides, if the point of the weapon had melted the tea-leaf would have fallen off it."

"Thank you," said Greatorex, and turned and conferred with the Crown solicitors.

Then he said: "We do not propose to proceed with the case, my lord."

The foreman of the jury rose quickly and said: "And the jury doesn't want to hear anything more, my lord. We're quite satisfied that the prisoner isn't guilty."

"Very good," said the Judge, and he put the question formally to the jury, who returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." He discharged Willoughton.

I CAME out of the court with Ruth and we waited for Willoughton.

Presently he came out of the door and stopped and shook himself. Then he saw Ruth and came to her. They did not greet one another. She just slipped her hand through his arm; and they walked out of the New Bailey together.

We made a good deal of noise, cheering them.

PACHMANN

BY

HERBERT S. GREENHALGH

A LITTLE man, almost dwarf-like, with an enormous head and a face reflecting personality in every line, walks slowly a few steps beyond the threshold of the room and stops. After a swift glance in my direction, as if to make sure of things, he bows gracefully and advances. In one hand is the stump of a cigar; the other is extended towards me.

But Vladimir de Pachmann never does anything conventional. I am given merely three fingers to clasp; fingers of a strange, silky softness such as I have never experienced before. Instinctively, one is tempted to think that here may be the secret of that tone beauty with which, for scores of years, he has entranced the musical world. Yet no pianist would be flattered by the suggestion, eliminating, as it does, the vital part played by soul, temperament, emotional feeling, and exquisite refinement.

There is no shyness about Pachmann. Instantly he pours forth a torrent of words, emphasizing his points by a wealth of gesticulation. He begins in English, but it is an advantage for the listener to understand several languages, for he is liable at any moment to branch off into French, Italian, or Russian, and is both pained and amazed if there is the slightest difficulty in following him in his linguistic flights.

I asked him how he became a pianist. He raised his eyes to the ceiling, and pointed a finger upward. "Gott!" he said. "Gott made me a pianist. I had to be. C'était nécessaire.

"But you want to know how I learned to be a pianist? Listen! I taught myself. Certainly! Why not? My father was a professor at Odessa University. He could not play the piano, but as an amateur violinist he knew something about musical theory, and he told me a few things that enabled me to make a start.

"I was eleven years old then, and for eight years I studied alone. How many pupils do that, hein? No professor; no anything. Well, the time came when I wanted to go to the Vienna Conservatoire, and—shall I tell you a funny story?"

Pachmann's eyes beamed with delight at the prospect of relating how he staggered the professors at Vienna. "I wished to enter the highest section of all," he said,

" but I was told that I would have to prove my ability first. So I presented myself one day to be examined. I had no music with me, and the examiner was rather angry until I offered to play any of the twenty-four studies of Chopin.

" Then, his anger changing to surprise, he named a piece. ' What key will you have it in ? ' I asked, for I could play all the studies in any key. He was what you call flabbergasted. After I had finished playing, he almost fell on my neck. ' I have heard Chopin for the first time to-day,' he said. He told me that they could not teach me anything as a Chopin player, but perhaps they could give mé some hints about Bach. Would I call the next day, with some Bach pieces ?

" I went again, and once more left my music at home. The professor was furious. ' Oh, I do not need the music,' I said. ' Which of Bach's forty-eight preludes and fugues will you have ? ' He told me not to make jokes there, but I insisted that I was serious. Then he named a fugue. ' Which key will you have it in ? ' I asked, for I could also transpose all these pieces into any key. He was—what do you say, consternated ?—ah, dumbfounded. Yes, that is the word. He ran to bring the other professors, and they were all dumbfounded. Mind, such a thing had never been done by any other young student, except Liszt. Years afterwards I told the great Liszt about all this."

As all the world knows, Pachmann is aware of the remarkable gifts bestowed upon him. "I am the greatest pianist alive," he remarked to me several times. Yet he has moods when he loves to pose as the veriest novice. As a young man he played an amusing prank upon an old lady who gave piano-forte lessons.

Calling at her house, he asked her if she would accept him as a pupil ? She agreed, and asked him to play a simple scale, which he proceeded to do in the manner of a five-year-old child. The old lady said he evidently had not the slightest idea of how to play, and he would have to be treated accordingly. She gave him an elementary lesson, and then, as a special favour, allowed him to hear her in " The Maiden's Prayer."

Pachmann patiently endured the ordeal, at the end of which he announced that he would like to play the piece himself. She objected that he must wait a little before he could hope to do that, but the " pupil " immediately began to play, putting in variations and ornamentations in a way that caused the old lady to stare at him aghast. Pachmann then told her who he was. As some compensation for his practical joke he supplied her with food and money for many years afterwards.

" I have a sense of humour," he remarked to me in a confidential kind of way. " At Boston, U.S.A., a few years ago, I had to play a Chopin concerto with an orchestra, and I pretended I was nervous and must have the music before me. So someone sat by my side turning the pages over one by one, as I played. But the music was upside down the whole time. The audience roared when they found out.

" But audiences do not always know everything, do they ? After I had played a Chopin study in your town of Cambridge, there was loud applause. I held up my hand for silence. ' None of you knows anything about piano-playing,' I said. ' I really played that very badly. Now I shall play it again, and if I play it well I shall tell you.' I went through the piece a second time, and then I kissed my hand. ' Bravo, Pachmann ! ' I exclaimed. " That was truly magnificent, Raphaelesque ! Now applaud ! ' I said, turning to the audience. You should have heard the noise."

Vladimir de Pachmann.

Astonishing as it may seem, Pachmann worked out at the age of seventy—he is now seventy-six—a completely new method of playing, and it has meant the re-studying and refingering of a concert repertoire which has taken sixty years to accumulate. He explained it to me after saying that there had been a certain amount of misapprehension concerning it. " It was said that I played with a stiff wrist. How absurd ! How can anyone play with a stiff

Pachmann at his summer home in America, where he spends his time practising and tending his cows.

wrist? I merely keep my hand in a straight line with my arm, instead of allowing it to move from side to side. As my hands move up and down the keyboard my arms go with them in a straight line. And I never allow my thumb to touch a black key. That was Clementi's rule. I thought out the reason of this, and I found that it was less fatiguing.

"My new system has four advantages. First, it avoids the jumping about of the body; second, it does not tire the player, for I can play a whole programme through, and have plenty of energy left to begin all over again; third, it gives the player a more impressive and reposeful appearance at the piano; fourth, it makes for a natural touch and beauty of tone.

"Ah, the tone! The people said I produced a lovely tone before, but it was the tone of a student. I was like other pianists; I had a nervous tone. Only Liszt had the right kind, but he had long arms. I need my method especially because I have short arms."

Pachmann went to the piano. His fingers caressed the keys, producing sounds of exquisite beauty, yet hardly seeming to move. The notes were struck with the last joints of the fingers, not with the hammer-stroke from the knuckles that we were all taught in childhood. He played a Chopin study, and it was as if one were listening to a divine voice of unmatched colour and timbre. Dreams come—rare visions instinctive in the human heart.

"A tone of velvet, hein?" he said as he continued to play. "Liszt told me that he wished Chopin could hear me because I play his nocturnes so beautifully." The chords rippled on, and the player seemed to be in communion with another world. It was Chopin of a rich lusciousness that probably no other living pianist could equal.

Pachmann the Chopinzee he has been called, a name that cleverly conveys a fine compliment. He is rather proud of the possession of a coat that belonged to the famous composer, and puts it on when he needs inspiration. Wearing this old, ragged, and tattered garment, he feels he can identify himself to some extent with the soul of the original owner. Yet he does not seek to be identified too closely with the music of Chopin. "People will persist in calling me a specialist in that kind of music, and I do not like that. It is absurd for any pianist to confine his best efforts to one composer. It is narrowing, and is liable to make one unable to play even that composer well. The true artiste must be broad. I play Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Liszt, Godowsky, and Grieg. I do not think that Bach, Mozart, and Weber should

ever be played at concerts. They are for students; not for the public. Besides, Bach did not write for the piano as it is known to-day. I am surprised that anyone should dare to 'arrange' his music; it is sacrilege to touch it.

"But Godowsky! Ah, there you have a real composer for the piano!"

Pachmann does not play Godowsky's compositions in public. "They would not understand," he said. "His music is technical, exceedingly difficult. For a friend I play it, yes; for the public—not yet. I have not finished with it. I have only played it four or five thousand times. When I have played it seven thousand times—then, perhaps."

For his daily practice period, Pachmann has selected seven of Godowsky's "Till Eulenspiegel" suite of thirty pieces. He has re-fingered them according to his new method, and has played them twice daily for five years. In addition he plays difficult scales for sixteen minutes each day, with a few octave studies by Joseffy for legato.

He is fond of recalling memories of great musicians, both past and present. Through his father he establishes a link with Beethoven, and he himself has had the privilege of hearing the widow of Schumann play the piano with that skill that made her a world celebrity.

"At a dinner I once attended," he said, "Liszt poured out my wine and Wagner lighted my cigar. Liszt took me to pay a personal visit to Wagner, and I played for him. At the close the Master said that I should one day be the finest living pianist, and kissed my hand. I was only a young man then, and this honour amazed me. 'No, no, great master,' I cried, 'it is I who should pay homage to you,' but Wagner made a gesture of disagreement. When I would have kissed his hand he offered me his cheek instead."

PACHMANN becomes especially enthusiastic when the name of Liszt is mentioned: "Ah, what a divine player! What a personality, how big in every way, how he inspired his interpretations with the poetry and fire of his genius! He is without an equal in the history of pianoforte-playing. And his sense of humour! He roared with laughter when I told him how I had surprised the professors at the Vienna Conservatoire. 'Like me,' he said. 'Exactly like me. When the great Czerny first heard me play (I was a boy then) he nearly fell over with astonishment. What a joke!'"

Pachmann spoke in the most generous terms of the wonderful powers of Paderewski. "He has genius," he said. "It is over forty years since I first met him. I was on my honeymoon, and he called on me to show me his now well-known Minuet. He had come all the way from Cracow, but what could a man on his honeymoon do? I could not begin to learn a new piece at such a time. The next time I saw him was at one of his American concerts. I can picture him now, with his massive head, his typically Polish features, and his big, delicate hands. He played Brahms, Mozart, and Chopin, and soon I was overcome with emotion. Such poetry, such feeling, such sincerity! Afterwards I went to him and kissed his hand. It was my little tribute to the grandeur of the occasion."

If Pachmann is asked whether he ever composes, he always replies "No," but the truth is that he destroys everything he writes because it does not conform with his high standard of art. He once wrote a concerto which he played with Liszt before Wagner, who exclaimed, "Wonderful! Only Schumann could write like that." Liszt added his encomiums, but the composer would not give it to the world.

"Things of that kind should be burned," he remarked. "Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Schumann, Godowsky—they can do much better than I. I am not a great composer, and if I cannot write like the five greatest, what does the world care?"

He told me how famous men in other walks of life had flattered him by their compliments. The late King Edward, when Prince of Wales, sent him a box of cigars, and these were treasured so highly that only two were ever given away. Liszt, of course, was one of the lucky recipients. The other was Renan, who, after hearing him play in Paris, inscribed a book in his name. The story was also related to me of how King Christian of Denmark paid a personal visit to the pianist at his hotel. "Why don't you come and dine with me at my palace?" asked the King. "Because I have not yet had the honour of an invitation, your Majesty," replied Pachmann, who was promptly scolded for allowing such a formality to prevent him.

One of his greatest admirers was the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, who had some skill as a musician, and was not a little proud of it. "One day," said Pachmann, "I was walking along a street in Petrograd when I met the Grand Duke. 'Good morning, colleague,' he greeted me. 'Since when have I been a Grand Duke?' was my reply." Pachmann looked at me closely to make sure whether the delicate, satirical thrust had been perceived, and then exploded with merriment.

Music, of course, is his absorbing passion. It not only fills his soul, but is the breath of

life to him. Very rarely can he be induced to leave his house for the purpose of exercise; the golden suns and blue skies of Italy itself fail almost entirely as a lure. "The sunshine is in my room," he said, "and if I need fresh air I can open the window." He loves to be near his beloved piano. Every afternoon, with a cigar as his companion, he takes an hour's rest, and then he opens the instrument (which is always carefully locked), tenderly dusts it, examines the keys, and arranges the stool. After a quarter of an hour devoted to these preliminaries he proceeds to practise. Soon the everyday world and its affairs cease to exist for him, and gradually he conjures up before his eyes a band of eager listeners. "Bravo! *Bien joué!*" he will exclaim, as though drawing attention to a passage that he has played particularly well. In his younger days, he told me, he practised for ten hours a day. Now he is content with four hours.

He is fond of an evening game of cards, and takes no pains to conceal his delight when fortune favours him. But probably his principal interest outside music is the collecting of precious stones. "When I was young," he said, "I was an earnest student of mineralogy, but my poverty prevented me from realizing all my desires. As soon as I began to make a name as a pianist I put aside a certain portion of my income for the purchase of the beautiful stones on which I had set my heart. Gradually I collected diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires—all unset, and many of them uncut."

For a long time he carried the stones about with him, spreading them on the piano, and "trying to translate their sparkle and brilliance into terms of sound." To-day Pachmann no longer carries his collection in his pockets, preferring to store it in a London safe-deposit vault. But he has one priceless stone which he never allows to pass from his personal possession. It is a genuine blue diamond, one of the only three that the world contains, and he tells a remarkable story of how it was obtained. He saw a blue diamond for the first time in the late Czar of Russia's collection. "Years afterwards I heard that another had been found. I did not know where it was, but I meant to have it, so I engaged a young woman to visit every jewellery shop in Europe. She was searching for five years before she was successful."

Pachmann has never disclosed what he paid for the gem, but he stated more than once previously that he would give his entire fortune to possess it. "In its setting of gold, it is now my constant companion, my never-failing source of inspiration," he said.

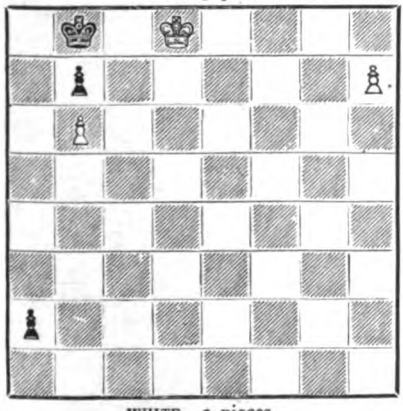
The story is typical of the man. Unconventional to a degree, in everything different from his fellows; perhaps, if you will, a little eccentric. Yet one of the greatest musical geniuses of his time, and a personality that will live in musical history.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

772.—A FINE CHESS ENDING.

BLACK—3 pieces.



WHITE—3 pieces.

White to play and win.

HERE is a chess ending that will be found extraordinarily interesting. I have failed to discover the name of the author. Obviously White's only chance is to Queen his Pawn, but Black will then Queen his own Pawn, and if White now plays Queen takes Queen Black will be stalemated and the game drawn. How is White to win?

773.—PACKING CIGARETTES.

A MANUFACTURER sends out his cigarettes in boxes of 160; they are packed in 8 rows of 20 each, and exactly fill the box. Could he, by packing differently, get more cigarettes than 160 into the box? If so, what is the greatest number that he could add? At first sight it sounds absurd to expect to get more cigarettes into a box that is already exactly filled, but a moment's consideration should give you the key to the paradox.

774.—DIVIDING BY THIRTY-SEVEN.

IN No. 739 we considered the chances of a haphazard arrangement of the 9 digits being divisible

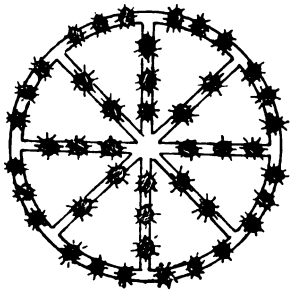
by 11 (by an obvious slip of the pen I find I gave the chances as 126 to 11, instead of 115 to 11). Now if the 9 digits are written at haphazard in any order, for example, 412539768, what are the chances that the number that happens to be produced will be divisible by 37 without remainder? This will be found an interesting little study. I showed, in the solution to No. 536 (March, 1921), a simple test for divisibility by 37, but we were not then restricted to the nine digits, as above.

775.—MISSING WORDS.

SHE ..... in vain. "Men are ....., and as shy,
As ..... in October," she says, with a sigh.

776.—THE SAPPHIRE BROOCH.

A LADY had a circular brooch set with sapphires, as shown in our illustration. When leaving it with



a dishonest jeweller, for repairs, she made the incautious remark, "I do not know how many stones there are—I have never counted them — but I can always check them in this way. If I count outwards from the centre along one of the spokes of the wheel, so to speak, along the rim and down the next spoke, there are always eight stones in any direction." Acting upon this knowledge, the man promptly stole five of the sapphires, and the lady, on the return of the brooch, checked them in her own way and found everything correct. How did the thief manage to steal the five stones and, by resetting as few as possible of the remainder, escape detection?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

768.—CROSS-FIGURE PUZZLE.

TAKE the group of 7 squares in the top right-hand corner. Horizontal K must be either 211, 112, or

	A 3	B 1	C 5		D 6		E 3	F 6	G 7
	H 1	9	2		J 9		K 1	2	1
L 9		5		M 3	4	N 1		8		O 4
P 4	9		Q 9	7	1	6	R 9		S 1	4
T 5		U 7		V 1	5	1	1		W 2	1
	X 7	1	Y 1		Z 1	5	7		AA 3	4
	BB 2	CC 1	6		DD 8	9	1		EE 4	4

121, to sum to 4. Complete group for the 3 cases and you will find that the third one alone will work to enable us to solve the Diagonal (up) C C = 12. So we can write in these 7 numbers as shown on the said diagonal. Now we can complete Diagonal F (down) by writing 4 at top of last column. We can also complete Diagonal K (down) by writing in the two 1's. Then we can complete Horizontal S and W, and as we shall find that the Diagonal E E (up) sums to 8, and both figures must be the same, we can complete that second group.

Now we can complete Vertical Y, then Horizontal B B, Vertical X, Horizontal X, Vertical U, Diagonal L (down), Horizontal P, Vertical L, all in order, and the two groups in the bottom left-hand corner are complete. Next we can complete Diagonal J (down), Diagonal Z (up), Diagonal L (up), Vertical A, Horizontal A, Vertical C, Horizontal H, Vertical B, Diagonal H (down), Diagonal X (up), Horizontal M, Diagonal B (down), Horizontal Z, Vertical N, Horizontal Q, Vertical R, Horizontal D D, Horizontal V, Vertical D, and all is done.

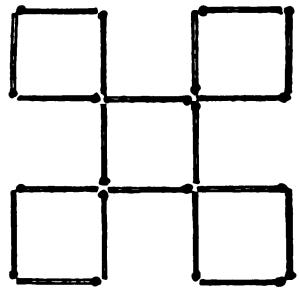
769.—TWO CYCLISTS.

THE error lies in assuming that the average speeds are equal. They are not. Atkins does a mile in $\frac{1}{3}$ hr. outwards and in $\frac{1}{4}$ hr. homewards. Half the sum of these fractions is $\frac{7}{24}$. Therefore, the man's average speed for the 400 miles is a mile in $\frac{24}{7}$ hr. The average of Baxter is a mile in $\frac{1}{10}$ hr.

770.—A CHARADE.

THE word is T E N—S C O R E.

771.—ANOTHER LITTLE MATCH PUZZLE.



THE diagram explains itself. Three matches have been removed and replaced at the bottom right-hand corner, making the five perfect squares required.

760.—THE TWO DIGITS.

THESE seem to have greatly interested readers and many have sent me solutions additional to those I gave in August. I will here give some of these. Of course, it is entirely a matter of individual taste what arithmetical forms and signs are admissible, but I should personally draw the line at expressions introducing "log" and "anti-log," while perhaps admitting the combination sign as in the last example, where 8, taken 2 at a time, equals 28.

$64 = (\sqrt{4})^6$ or $\sqrt{(4^6)}$; $24 = |\underline{\sqrt{4+2}}$; $4^3 = 2^4$;

$7^1 = \sqrt{1 + |\underline{7}}$; $15 = 5 \div \sqrt{.1}$; $25 = 5 \div .2$;

$28 = {}^8C_2$.

E RUBBER STRAP "SAPPER"

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for November, 1925.

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Frontispiece: She picked up the india-rubber strap. "What are you going to do with that?" he shouted, and there was terror in his voice. "Get the truth, you devil," she answered.

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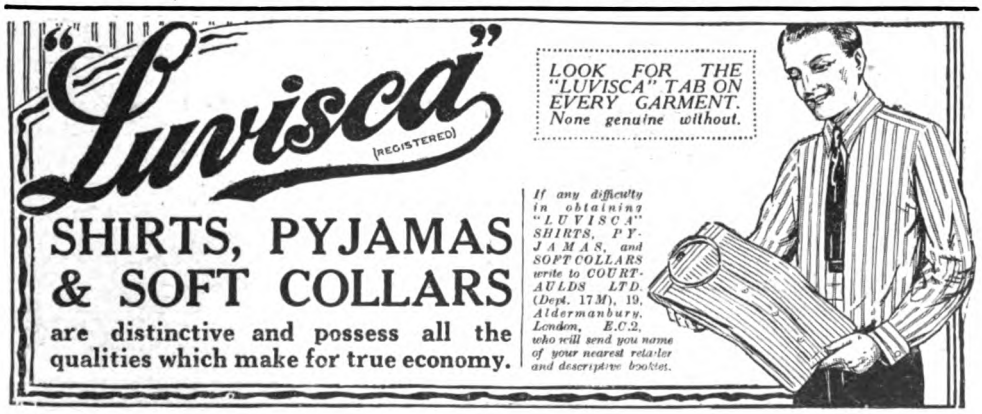

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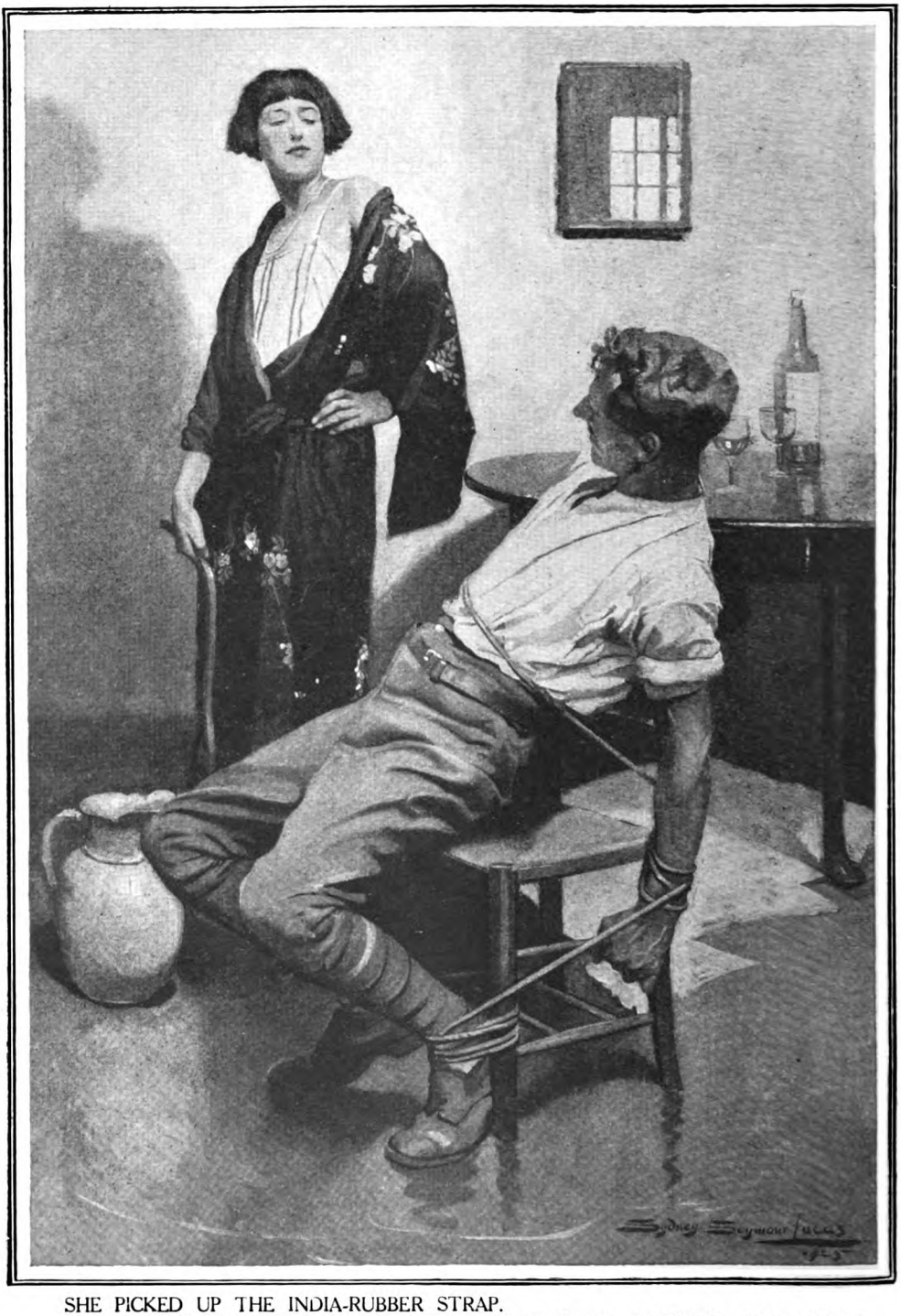

SHE PICKED UP THE INDIA-RUBBER STRAP.

"WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT?" HE SHOUTED, AND THERE WAS TERROR IN HIS VOICE.

"GET THE TRUTH, YOU DEVIL," SHE ANSWERED.

(See page 435).

THE RUBBER STRAP

By

"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY S. SEYMOUR LUCAS

DO you know that game called "Are you there?" You may find it being played in Mess on guest night after dinner, and you will assuredly find it included in any sports that may be held on an ocean-going liner. Its rules are simple: its charm immense—to the onlookers. You lie down on the deck, facing your opponent, grasping his left hand with your own. Each of you in his right hand holds a rolled-up copy of an illustrated weekly, or some similar weapon. A pillow cover is then placed over each of your heads to blindfold you. At the word "Go," one of you says "Are you there?" The other answers "Yes," at the same time moving his head into a position of safety. Any position may be chosen so long as his left elbow remains on the deck and his left hand remains in yours. You then lift your right hand and aim a heavy blow with the weapon it contains at the place where you imagine his head to be. If you hit it you count one, and then it's his turn. You go on till one or other of you is stunned. In fact, a great game—for the onlookers.

And my reason for this brief dissertation on one pastime of the idle rich is that it was directly responsible for my hearing a very strange yarn. I am aware that when a teller of stories prefaces one of them with the remark that it is true, the sophisticated reader prepares himself resignedly for a worse lie than usual. And so I won't say that this is true, but merely that it was told me by an American who claims to be a direct descendant of George Washington.

The game was over: the corpses had been laid out on the deck to cool. Personally I had not competed; nor had the American. On the subject of being butchered for a Roman holiday our ideas coincided remarkably. On other points, too, there seemed no great divergence in our opinions.

"I've some fruit syrup in my cabin," he remarked, thoughtfully watching one of the corpses arise and stagger aft to die. "Also some vermouth."

"I can supply gin and a shaker," I put in hopefully.

"Good," he said. "Are we there? Yes."

He mixed two of the best, and then he pulled out his cabin trunk and started rummaging through the contents.

"See that?" he said. "What do you think of it?"

It was a piece of black india-rubber about eighteen inches long, an inch wide, and half an inch thick.

"A rather good weapon for 'Are you there?'" I answered.

"I thought you'd say that," he grinned. "And used for just one blow at a time it would be. Used another way—— See here. Put your leg up on that bunk."

I did so, and he raised the rubber thong in his hand.

"I'm not going to hit you hard," he said. "But just see how long you can stand it."

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He started above my knee, and worked gradually up my thigh; then back again. And he didn't hit hard. He hit no harder than the smack you would give a naughty child, and a small child at that. Tap; tap; tap—that rubber thong wound itself round my leg in a different place each time. No one blow could even be said to hurt, and yet I only stood twenty-five of them. There's no good suffering agony for nothing. After about the tenth hit every single muscle and sinew in my leg started shrieking at the same moment; after the twenty-fifth I should have begun to shriek myself if I hadn't given in.

He smiled and mixed me another cocktail.

"A souvenir," he said, "of a very strange affair. That game this afternoon put me in mind of it."

"Having half-killed me," I said, "the talking is on you. Fire ahead."

"It took place in Paris after the war," he began. "Everything, including discipline, was a bit lax—same as it was in England. But the war was over and nobody minded very much as long as things were kept within reasonable bounds. I'd been in our Intelligence myself, and when my division went back overseas I got leave to stop on in France for a while.

I WAS sitting in my hotel one morning, when in walked a man I knew fairly intimately. His name was John Thripley, and he was in charge of one of our big military stores. Not ordnance, but commissariat: tobacco, ham, tinned beef, all that sort of stuff. I'd been over it once while the fighting was on, and there was enough there to have fed all the belligerent armies for a year.

I gave him a hail, and he came over and sat down.

"Morning, John," I said. "You look worried. Mice been at the cheese?"

"In a manner of speaking," he answered. "Only they're damned large mice. I'm floored, Bill, and that's straight; and it's a pretty serious business."

"What's up?" I said. "Can I help?"

He shook his head doubtfully.

"I'll tell you what it is, but I don't want it to go any farther. You know I'm in charge of 'A' dump, don't you? Well, about two months ago a bunch of indents were presented in the ordinary way for stuff. I think there were about half-a-million cigarettes, and some boots, and two or three hundredweight of ham. Everything was perfectly in order—I've examined the vouchers myself—and so the stuff was loaded on to the lorry that had come for it, and the lorry was driven away.

"Naturally I thought no more about it, until the next morning produced another batch of similar indents from the same people. The storekeeper brought it to me—by mere luck it happened to be the same man who had handled the vouchers the previous day—and asked me what he was to do. Well, there was only one thing to be done. I got on the telephone to the people who wanted the stuff, and asked 'em what under the sun they wanted with two such big demands on consecutive days.

"The guy at the other end of the wire began to splutter and asked me what the devil I was talking about. He hadn't sent in two indents; he'd only sent in one. A lorry had left that morning for the stuff, driven by a man named Wilson. And sure enough Wilson was there right enough cursing good and strong at the delay. So there was nothing for it but to load up the lorry and let him go. Whatever mistake had occurred was nothing to do with him.

"Back I went to the office and hauled out yesterday's indents. Not a flaw to be found in 'em; they were, on the face of things, absolutely genuine. So then I got on the telephone all the way round. I rang up everyone I could think of, and asked them the same question. Had a lorry—and I gave 'em the type of bus it was—turned up for them with the following stores on board—and I gave 'em a detailed list of the stores. No—it hadn't; same answer everywhere. But in case it did arrive they'd ring me up.

"Well—I never got deafened with that telephone bell. Not only the stores but the whole blamed lorry were never heard of again. About seventy-five thousand dollars' worth of stuff completely vanished.

"There was always the possibility of accident, of course, and so I promptly reported the matter to the police. But as the days went by and no news came in, I had to come to the conclusion that we'd been had all right, and that a barefaced robbery had been committed right under our noses."

"Just a moment, John," I put in. "Did no one recognize the driver?"

"I thought of that," he answered, "but it's a blank. The driver and his mate had on goggles, and the other fellow who helped to load was just an ordinary sort of bloke—quite inconspicuous. My storeman says he might remember him, but he wouldn't swear to it. Don't forget, Bill, we get 'em in by the score daily, and if a bunch are out on a game like that they're not going to employ a man with a wooden leg and a strawberry mark on his face.

"Now that was the beginning of it. Four days later Anston, who runs 'C'

store, loaded up two thousand pairs of boots, two thousand cardigans, and two thousand suits of underclothes on another lorry. And, damn it, that disappeared into the blue also. Over I went as soon as I heard of it to see Anston, and we compared those indents. Not a trace of resemblance in the writing—not a clue. His, to all appearances, was just as genuine as mine, and there we were, stung again good and hard. It was obvious what had happened : it was obvious that the stolen stuff had been sold to the French, or was being kept in some secret place for disposal to them in due course. It was also obvious that we were up against a thoroughly daring gang, of whom at any rate some must be our own people.

" So that very morning we called a general meeting of all the fellows who were running stores to discuss what was to be done. They'd done it twice now with success, and we felt pretty sure they wouldn't be able to resist the temptation of trying it again. The point was how to catch 'em. They weren't fools, and they must know that the loss had been discovered. Recognition was well-nigh impossible. We had six big depots lying some distance apart, and granted that they only tried one robbery at each they'd be fairly safe in using the same men each time. But since it was more than likely that there was a biggish gang of them, there was nothing to prevent 'em changing round. So at last we decided that the only thing to do, in the event of a big indent coming in, was to ring up the formation making the demand and get it confirmed before issue.

" By Jove ! Bill, we got some pretty blasphemous confirmation down the telephone. What the hell, etc., etc. ? Wasn't the indent there staring us in the face ? Were we trying to be funny ? You see, we weren't over-communicative as to why we were doing it. No one likes to admit he's been soaked properly.

" FOR a fortnight nothing happened. Then in comes Payton one morning to see me, gibbering at the mouth with rage.

" ' They've stung me, Bill. Three days ago. Jam, ham, tinned beef—every darned thing you can think of. Best part of fifty thousand dollars' worth. My telephone was out of action that morning, and I was infernally busy. The indent was signed by Jack Cooper : I'd swear to his signature in a thousand. If I've seen it once, I've seen it a hundred times. It was a forgery.'

" He lit a cigarette, and ramped up and down the office.

" ' I took it out to him, and, damn it ! it even deceived him. It wasn't until we found there was no carbon duplicate in his office that he was quite sure he hadn't signed it himself and forgotten about it.'

" Well, that made three of us who had taken it in the neck, and we were getting sorer than hell. Cartwright of ' D ' store, and the other two, Mason and Digby, who hadn't been caught, were kind of tolerant about it—the implication being that we'd better come along to them and learn our job. At least, that was the idea until Cartwright loaded up a lorry with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of stuff which was wanted urgently. He verified everything : had the driver brought into his office to have his photograph taken from about forty different angles, and generally read the Riot Act all round. That lorry broke down thirty miles out of Paris. The men had stopped at an inn to have their lunch, and no power on earth would start the engine after. I'm no motorist, but I gather something had gone in the magneto.

" Well, luckily another lorry—an empty one—passed shortly after, going the same way. So they changed the stuff over, and that was that. Cartwright swelled our numbers to four, though he swears it wasn't his fault. Anyway, none of the stuff was ever seen again.

" And that left Mason and Digby. Mason started the ball rolling in fine style. It seems one morning that he got suspicious of a driver who turned up, and there being no flies on Jake Mason he was hit with a brilliant idea. So he got himself nailed up in a packing-case reputed to contain tinned meat, and was loaded up with the rest of the stuff. As far as I can make out he was put in upside down and had a sixty-mile drive, so he must have had a real fine morning. Still, he didn't care so long as he could run them to ground. He'd got two guns with him, and he wasn't going to hesitate about using them.

" Of course, as I said to him, it might have been a darned good show if the lorry hadn't been a perfectly genuine one. But when they unpacked Jake, the scene was a trying one. They first of all thought he was trying to be funny ; then they insisted he was mad. And when poor old Jake tried to explain it wasn't a success. They had indented for tinned meat, and Jake as a substitute left them cold. However, he pacified them after a while, and went back to Paris by train, to find the line in his office darned near fused with the blasphemy coming over it from another quarter. What had happened to the lorry that had started off that morning for Beauvais ?

" All the time Jake had been packed up in his box, so he sent for his quartermaster. Yes—perfectly true. A lorry had started

right enough, and the quartermaster had not only rung up to find out that it was all right, but in addition he knew the driver personally. They came from the same town in the States.

"And here, Bill, the matter becomes even more serious than before. Up-to-date there had been no violence; this time there was. The driver was found more dead than alive in a ditch; his mate is still in hospital unconscious, and the lorry has never been seen again."

John Thripley lit a cigarette, and intimated he was thirsty.

"That's a very strange story, John," I remarked. "For five lorries to disappear like that beats cock-fighting."

"Five lorries worth a quarter of a million dollars at a conservative estimate," he grunted. "But it's not the money I mind so much—it's not mine. What gets my goat is being stung like that. And the point is, Bill, there is still the sixth lorry to go. Your criminal—and, mark you, this is no ordinary man—is a darned conceited fellow. And I'm open to a bet that he won't be happy until he's done in Digby. There's another thing too: he's getting to the end of his tether or he wouldn't have taken to violence. Highway robbery in broad daylight on a main road is a pretty dangerous operation."

"They probably stopped the lorry and asked for a lift," I said. "And then laid out the driver and his mate at a suitable opportunity. Have you got no suspicions at all?"

"Not the faintest vestige," he answered. "And the police seem as floored as we are. They take up the line, and I hardly blame 'em for it, that the criminals are our own people, and that we ought to be able to look after our own affairs. Of course, they don't actually say that—but they imply it."

THE door swung open at that moment, and an officer came in. I didn't know him, but John Thripley did, and I heard him whistle under his breath.

"It's Digby," he said. "And something has happened."

Just then the new-comer saw John, and came over to our table.

"By God! Thripley," he said, grimly, "I don't rest until I've caught those swine. Have you heard what happened last night? It's murder—cold-blooded murder this time.'

"The devil it is," said John. "You can speak out: I've just been telling my friend here all about it."

"I was sitting in my office the night before last about five o'clock," said Digby, "when one of my sergeants came in.

'Look here, Captain,' he said to me, 'I reckon I've got a line on those crooks.'

'Good man,' I cried. 'Who are they?'

'I'd sooner not say, sir,' he said, 'for I may be wrong.'

'How did you get the line?' I asked him.

'Well,' he said, with a bit of a grin, 'there's a little cabaret called the Petit Souris, where I go sometimes to have a drink and a dance. And there's a girl there—Marie is her name—who seems to like dancing with me. I was sitting at a table with her last night, and I found I'd run out of cigarettes. So she pulls out a paper packet of Fatimas and offers it to me.

'Hullo! Marie!' I said, 'where did you get these from? You're becoming a proper little American.'

'She laughed and told me that all the girls had them now, as they were so easy to get.

'Is that so?' I answered. 'I didn't know you found it any easier to get 'em now than before. Do the boys give 'em to you?'

'She shook her head, and then suddenly she sat up in her chair and laid her hand on my arm.

'Do you see that man who has just come in?'

'I looked over at the door, and saw an American soldier standing there with a girl on each arm. He'd got the face of a Chicago tough, but in about ten seconds you couldn't see him for girls. They were round him like bees round honey.

'He seems popular,' I said.

'Because he gives away so many presents,' said Marie. 'Cigarettes, and jam, and meat, and a pair of boots to Lisette's father, and——'

'But I guess I wasn't listening, Captain: I was just staring at her and then at him.

'Where does he get them from, Marie?' I said.

'She shrugged her shoulders; she wasn't interested in that.

'But I don't like him,' she went on. 'He is a *cochon*.'

Digby chewed savagely at his cigar.

"There's no good my repeating the whole conversation," he went on. "All that matters is that my sergeant was pretty well convinced in his own mind that this fellow knew a good deal more than was healthy about these robberies. I don't know whether he gave himself away or not—he must have; but the fact remains that I've just been to the mortuary to identify his dead body. He'd been plugged through the heart at close range. You could see the mark of the scorch on his coat."

"When did it happen?" I asked.

"By God! Thripley," he said, grimly. "I don't rest until I've caught those swine."

"Some time last night," he answered. "And I don't quit Paris till I've caught the guy who did it."

Which was a very fine sentiment, but easier to say than to carry out. The sergeant had not mentioned the man's name: in fact, Digby couldn't say if he even knew it. All that we had to go on was that he looked like a Chicago tough, and had been in this cabaret place two nights previously. Also—and in this, so it seemed to me, lay our trump card—that he was well-known and popular with the little ladies of the quarter.

Quite obviously the Petit Souris was our jumping-off ground, but at once there cropped up a difficulty. If this man was the man or one of the men we wanted, he was pretty well certain to know both Digby and Thripley by sight. And the instant he saw them in such an unexpected haunt he'd be bound to smell a rat. Now we hadn't an atom of proof to go on, and the one essential thing was not to scare our bird if we were to have a hope of bringing it home to him.

"There's only one thing to do," I said. "Let me go to this place alone. I've got plain clothes here, and he won't know me. I'll get in touch with this girl Marie if I can, and if I see this fellow I'll remember his face, and that will put us a step forward, anyway. Once he's known it oughtn't to be difficult to get enough proof to convict him."

So that evening I went off to the Petit Souris. I got there about nine, and found it the usual sort of place. There were about twenty girls there, a few Frenchmen, and two or three Britishers. But there was no sign of any American soldier.

"Tell me," I said to the waiter who brought my drink, "is there any girl here of the name of Marie?"

"Mon Dieu, m'sieur," he cried, "half-a-dozen at least."

"I guessed that," I answered. "But throw your memory back, my lad, three nights ago. Do you remember an American *sous-officier* who was in here sitting at a table with one of those six Maries?"

He gave me a quick look of suspicion, and I knew I'd started one hare. His face assumed a look of bovine imbecility and he shook his head. So many people came in that he had completely forgotten the incident. He regretted it deeply, but he couldn't assist me.

"You may keep the change," I remarked, showing him a twenty-franc note, "if your memory improves. But it must be the right Marie."

He hesitated: cupidity struggling with fear. Then suddenly he leant forward on the pretence of drying the table with a napkin.

"This is not a good place for Americans, sir," he whispered. "I would go if I was you."

"Well, you're not me," I said. "And I'm not going. Now, then—has your memory come back?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"As m'sieur wishes. The girl you want is the one in green sitting by herself, three tables away."

"Good for you," I said. "There's the note."

He bustled away, and after a moment or two I glanced casually at the girl. She was a pretty little thing, and I noticed she kept looking at the door as if she was expecting someone. And very soon I noticed another thing, too. All the other girls—at least, all those who hadn't got men with them—were looking at her surreptitiously and whispering amongst themselves. Evidently there was some secret which concerned her, and of which, so it struck me, she was in ignorance.

Further, it seemed to me that I was the object of a considerable amount of interest. At first I thought it was simply because I was a stranger, but after a while I began to realize that it was something more than that. It's hard to explain exactly what I mean, but it struck me that in some way my presence was being connected with this girl Marie. It wasn't the waiter, because I'd noticed it before I spoke to him. It couldn't be me personally, for I'd never been to the place before, and no one there knew me. So it boiled down to the fact that it must be because I was an American.

WELL, there was no good wasting time. I was there to see Marie, and get what I could out of her. So when I'd finished my drink I got up and strolled over to her table, conscious that every girl in the room was watching me.

"Will you give me the pleasure of a dance, mam'selle?" I asked.

She stared at me for a while without speaking.

"I am not dancing to-night," she said, quietly.

"Too bad," I answered, sitting down beside her. "I've been watching you, and it seems to me you're waiting for somebody. I wonder if I can guess who it is?"

"Are you an American officer?" she asked.

"I am," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Then, m'sieur—go away. This place is not safe for you. It is not safe for any American. Mon Dieu! If I only knew what had happened——"

She broke off, and sat there twisting her handkerchief between her fingers.

"Happened to whom?" I asked her.

"M'sieur—do you know a Sergeant Franklin?"

Now that was the name of Digby's murdered sergeant; I'd asked him.

"What do you know of Sergeant Franklin?" I said, cautiously.

"Listen, m'sieur—he was my friend. He promised that he would be here last night—but he never came. And I must see him. I must warn him."

I took the bull by both horns.

"Marie," I said, "Sergeant Franklin was murdered last night."

For a moment I thought she was going to faint. Her face turned the colour of the tablecloth, and her breath came in little gasps.

"Take a pull at yourself, my dear," I went on. "It's because of that that I'm sitting here talking to you. Do you know who it was who killed him?"

But she hardly seemed to hear the question.

"So that's what all the mystery is," she whispered savagely. "They knew—these pigs."

She sat up suddenly and stared at the door.

"Mon Dieu! he is early to-night. M'sieur, don't look round. For God's sake don't look round. Do you want me to help you to find the man who murdered Sergeant Franklin?"

"Sure thing, Marie," I said. "But will you be all right? I don't want to get you into trouble."

She laughed a little harshly.

"What does it matter about me?" she cried, impatiently. "Don't you understand that I loved him? And that brute—that devil killed him. Because of what I said. Do you suppose I mind—now—if they kill me? As they will."

She added those last three words under her breath.

"Will you promise to do exactly what I say?"

"I promise."

I saw there was no time for argument.

"First—give me your address"

I told her the name of my hotel.

"Good. To-morrow morning I will ring you up there. Then come to the address I shall give you, and bring with you some friends. But now, to-night, there is not much time. In a few seconds a man will come up to this table. He will insult you. I, too, shall seem to agree with him. Say nothing; answer nothing—just go."

She sat back in her chair laughing, and snapped her fingers in my face. It was done so suddenly, her change of expression was so abrupt, that for a moment I was nonplussed. Then, as a coarse voice spoke from behind my shoulder, I understood.

"And who under the sun may you be?"

I turned round to find an American private regarding me offensively, and for a moment my temper almost got the better of me. I'd forgotten that I was in plain clothes and that he couldn't know I was an officer. He was a villainous-looking swine—one of the type it's better to avoid unless you're asking for trouble—and I guessed at once that this was the Chicago tough of whom Sergeant Franklin had spoken to Digby.

"Get out!" he snarled. "Beat it while the going's good, or you may find yourself leaving feet first."

The girl laughed as I rose to my feet, and got rid of a choice bit of Parisian *argot* at my expense. And then, for an instant, the man turned away to shout to the waiter, and her eyes rested on his back. By Jove! I've never seen such a depth of concentrated hatred on anyone's face before or since. It was diabolical—devilish. But when I got to the door he was sitting beside her with his arm round her waist, and she was pointing a derisive finger at me. Evidently the game had commenced. The point that worried the others was whether it was genuine—or not.

THEY were all round in my hotel early the next morning, to say nothing of the Provost Marshal, and we discussed it while we waited. Personally, I felt sure that the girl was on our side, but they weren't so certain. They hadn't seen that look in her eyes, and were sceptical about the whole thing.

"On her own showing," as Digby said, "this fellow has been giving things away lavishly. Granted that it's the same man, didn't she tell that poor devil Franklin so? So is she likely to split on him?"

And at that very moment the telephone bell rang. I picked up the receiver, and from the other end came her voice:

"Come at once to 15, Rue de St. Gare."

It was tense, that voice of hers—tense and quivering with excitement, and her mood communicated itself to me.

"Come on, you fellows," I cried. "The kid has done what she said."

We tumbled into a couple of taxis, each of us with a gun in his pocket. There was always the possibility of a trap, and we were taking no chances. And in ten minutes we arrived at her house. She came down to meet us at the door, and her face was white, with dark rings under her eyes.

"Good morning, Marie," I said, holding out my hand. "What has happened?"

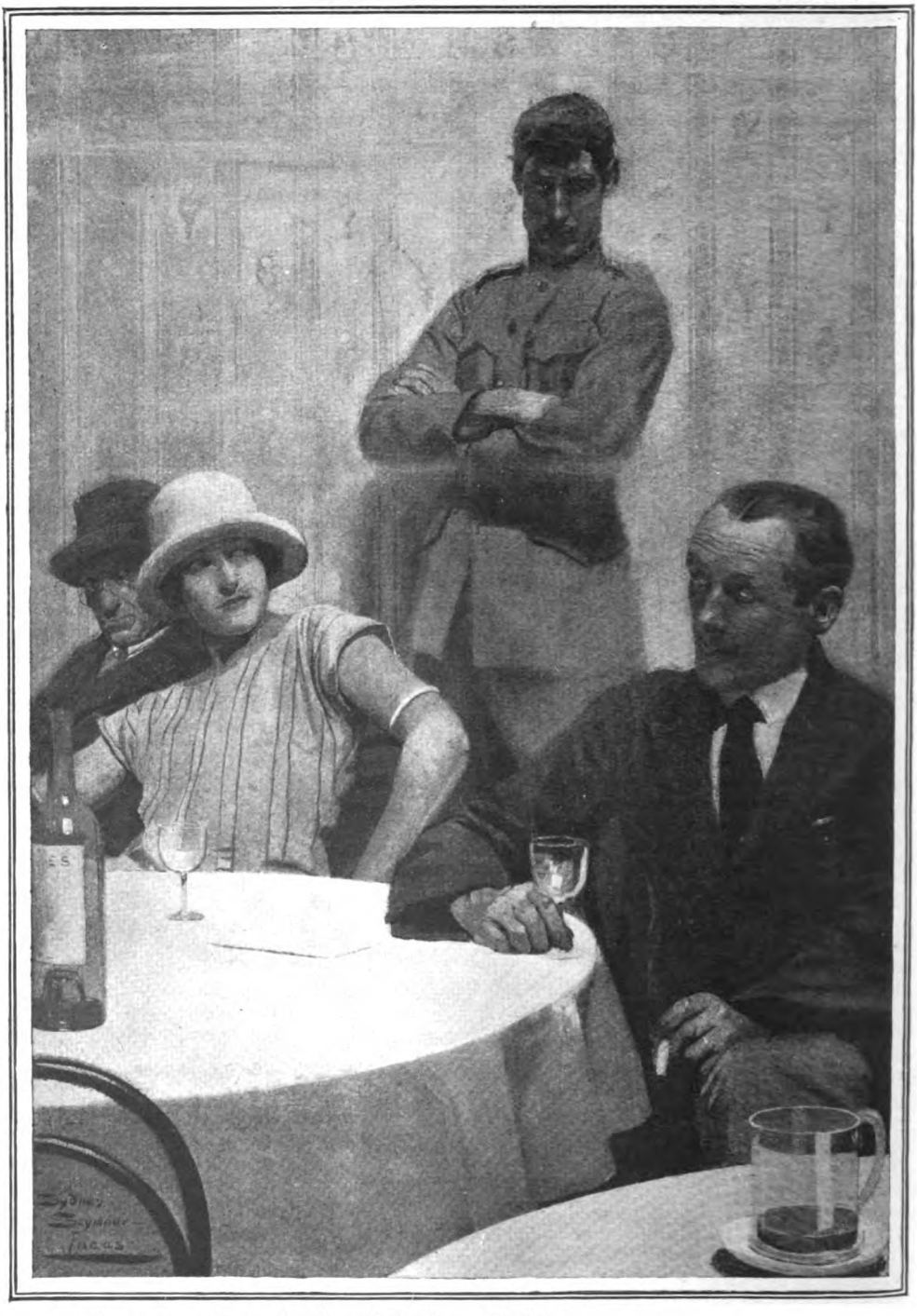
"Come and see," she answered briefly, and led the way upstairs.

We crowded into the room after her, to find a strange sight confronting us. Lashed hand and foot to a chair was the man I had met the night before, and he was unconscious.

"You want the truth," she said quietly. "All right: you're going to have it. Go in there."

"Look here, Marie," I said, nervously. "What are you going to do?"

With a girl of that type you never can



A coarse voice spoke from behind my shoulder.

"Get out! Beat it while the going's good, or you may find yourself leaving feet first."

tell, and I had visions of vitriol and other choice devices.

"Don't be afraid," she said, contemptuously. "I'll leave the brute for you just as he is."

It was her bedroom we went into, and it was behind the chair where the man sat bound, so that he couldn't see us though we could see him.

"Don't make a sound," she said to us. "I'm going to wake him."

She picked up a jug of cold water and flung it in his face, and after a moment or two he gave a spluttering cough and his head moved.

"What the hell has happened?" he muttered, stupidly, as he stared at the girl who was facing him.

"I'll kill you for this," he snarled, and she laughed and picked up that india-rubber strap.

"What are you going to do with that?" he shouted, and there was terror in his voice.

"Get the truth, you devil," she answered.

You could see the man's great muscles heaving and straining at the ropes that held him, but she'd lashed him in too well, had Marie.

"What's the good of the truth?" he screamed. "I'll deny it after, and there will be no proof."

"I'll chance that," she said quietly, and started in on him with the strap.

Up one leg—down the other: up one arm—down the other: again and again and again, while we watched fascinated. At the beginning of the third circuit he gave an awful groan and she paused.

"Who killed Sergeant Franklin?" she asked.

A flood of abuse was the only answer.

At the beginning of the fifth she repeated the question, and by this time the sweat had come clean through his clothes, and he was dripping like a sponge. But he still stuck it.

At the beginning of the seventh he gave in.

"I did," he croaked.

"Why did you kill him?" she demanded.

"Because he knew too much," he muttered.

"About you stealing the lorries?" she went on.

"Of course," he cried. "What else? Let me get up, you devil: let me get up."

"Not yet. I want the names of the men who have been helping you."

He gave 'em—half-a-dozen in all, and six men in the back-room jotted down those names as he said them.

"Now let me up, you she-cat," he snarled. "And may God help you when I get my hands on you."

But Marie had slipped suddenly to the floor, and when we got to her we found she'd fainted.

THE American paused, fingering the rubber strap thoughtfully.

"What was the end?" I asked.

"The chair in America for him," he answered grimly. "Our methods of examination are a little more drastic than yours, and we got the truth pretty effectively out of his confederates. They were deserters—the lot of 'em, and O'Brien, the leader, was an expert forger to boot. Moreover, he was wanted for murder on our side as well: so, as there was a prejudice against killing an American in France, they did the good deed in America."

"And Marie?" I asked.

"They got her all right, though I don't know how. Someone gave her away, I suppose. Personally I never saw her again. But once—just before I left Paris—I was walking through the cemetery where Franklin was buried. And there was a little bunch of cheap flowers on his grave. They were old and faded, and I turned to an attendant near by.

'Who put these here?' I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

'A girl, m'sieur,' he answered. 'And I have let them remain. They are dead—but then so is she.'

'What's that?' I cried. 'Marie dead?'

'M'sieur knew her?' he said, indifferently. 'But yes—she is dead. She was stabbed in the heart not a hundred yards from the cemetery gates the same evening that she put those flowers on the grave. Who by? M'sieur, who knows? *C'est la guerre, n'est-ce pas?*—or very nearly.'

The Land of Mist

OR

THE QUEST OF EDWARD MALONE

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

IX.

WHICH INTRODUCES SOME VERY PHYSICAL PHENOMENA.

MALONE seemed destined to be entangled in the affairs of the Linden family, for he had hardly seen the last of the unfortunate Tom, now undergoing a sentence of two months' hard labour, before he became involved in a very much more unpleasant fashion with his unsavoury brother.

The episode began by a telephone ring in the morning and the voice of Algernon Mailey at the far end of the wire.

"Are you clear for this afternoon?"

"At your service."

"I say, Malone, you are a hefty man. You played Rugger for Ireland, did you not? You don't mind a possible rough-and-tumble, do you?"

Malone grinned over the receiver.

"You can count me in."

"It may really be rather formidable. We shall have possibly to tack e a prize-fighter."

"Right-o!" said Malone, cheerfully.

"And we want another man for the job. Do you know any fellow who would come along just for the sake of the adventure? If he knows anything about psychic matters, all the better."

Malone puzzled for a moment. Then he had an inspiration.

"There is Roxton," said he. "He's not a chicken, but he is a useful man in a row. I think I could get him. He has been keen on your subject since his Dorsetshire experience."

"Right! Bring him along! If he can't come, we shall have to tackle the job ourselves. Forty-one, Belshaw Gardens, S.W. Near Earl's Court Station. Three p.m. Right!"

Malone at once rang up Lord John, and soon heard the familiar voice.

"What's that, young fellah? A scrap? Why, certainly. What! I mean I had a golf match at Richmond Deer Park, but this sounds more attractive. What! Very good. I'll meet you there."

And so it came about that at the hour of three, Mailey, Lord John, and Malone found themselves seated round the fire in the comfortable drawing-room of the barrister. His wife, a sweet and beautiful woman, who was his helpmate in his spiritual as well as in his material life, was there to welcome them.

"Now, dear, you are not on in this act," said Mailey. "You will retire discreetly into the wings. Don't worry if you hear a row."

"But I do worry, dear. You'll get hurt."

Mailey laughed.

"I think your furniture may possibly get hurt. You have nothing else to fear, dear. And it's all for the good of the Cause. That always settles it," he explained, as his wife reluctantly left the room. "I really think she would go to the stake for the Cause. Her great loving womanly heart knows what it would mean for this grey earth if people could get away from the shadow of death.

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By Jove! she is an inspiration to me. Well," he went on with a laugh, " I must not get on to that subject. We have something very different to think of—something as hideous and vile as she is beautiful and good. It concerns Tom Linden's brother."

" I've heard of the fellow," said Malone. " I used to box a bit and I am still a member of the N.S.C. Silas Linden was very nearly Champion in the Welters."

" That's the man. He is out of a job and thought he would take up mediumship. Naturally I and other Spiritualists took him seriously, for we all love his brother, and these powers often run in families, so that his claim seemed reasonable. So we gave him a trial last night."

" Well, what happened ? "

" I suspected the fellow from the first. You understand that it is hardly possible for a medium to deceive an experienced Spiritualist. When there is deception it is at the expense of outsiders. I watched him carefully from the first, and I seated myself near the cabinet. Presently he emerged clad in white. I broke the contact by pre-arrangement with my wife, who sat next me, and I felt him as he passed me. He was, of course, in white. I had a pair of scissors in my pocket and I snipped off a bit from the edge."

Mailey drew a triangular piece of linen from his pocket.

" There it is, you see. Very ordinary linen. I have no doubt the fellow was wearing his night-gown."

" Why did you not have a show-up at once ? " asked Lord John.

" There were several ladies there, and I was the only really able-bodied man in the room."

" Well, what do you propose ? "

" I have appointed that he come here at three-thirty. He is due now. Unless he has noticed the small cut in his linen, I don't think he has any suspicion why I want him."

" What will you do ? "

" Well, that depends on him. We have to stop him at any cost. That is the way our Cause gets bemired. Some villain who knows nothing about it comes into it for money, and so the labours of honest mediums get discounted. The public very naturally brackets them all together. With your help I can talk to this fellow on equal terms, which I certainly could not do if I were alone. By Jove! here he is! "

THERE was a heavy step outside. The door was opened and Silas Linden, fake medium and ex-prize-fighter, walked in. His small piggy grey eyes under their shaggy brows looked round with suspicion at the three men. Then he forced a smile and nodded to Mailey.

" Good day, Mr. Mailey. We had a good evening last night, had we not ? "

" Sit down, Linden," said Mailey, indicating a chair. " It's about last night that I want to talk to you. You cheated us."

Silas Linden's heavy face flushed red with anger.

" What's that ? " he cried, sharply.

" You cheated us. You dressed up and pretended to be a spirit."

" You are a damned liar! " cried Linden. " I did nothing of the sort."

Mailey took the rag of linen from his pocket and spread it on his knee.

" What about that ? " he asked.

" Well, what about it ? "

" It was cut out of the white gown you wore. I cut it out myself as you stood in front of me. If you examine the gown you will find the place. It's no use, Linden. The game is up. You can't deny it."

For a moment the man was completely taken aback. Then he burst into a stream of horrible profanity.

" What's the game ? " he cried, glaring round him. " Do you think I am easy and that you can play me for a sucker ? Is it a frame-up, or what ? You've chose the wrong man for a try-on of that sort."

" There is no use being noisy or violent, Linden," said Mailey, quietly ; " I could bring you up in the police-court to-morrow. I don't want any public scandal, for your brother's sake. But you don't leave this room until you have signed a paper that I have here on my desk."

" Oh, I don't, don't I ? Who will stop me ? "

" We will."

The three men were between him and the door.

" You will! Well, try that! " He stood before them with rage in his eyes and his great hands knotted. " Will you get out of the way ? "

They did not answer, but they all three gave the fighting snarl, which is perhaps the oldest of all human expressions. The next instant Linden was upon them, his fists flashing out with terrific force. Mailey, who had boxed in his youth, stopped one blow, but the next beat in his guard and he fell with a crash against the door. Lord John Roxton was hurled to one side, but Malone, with a footballer's instinct, ducked his head and caught the prize-fighter round the knees. If a man is too good for you on his feet, then put him on his back, for he cannot be scientific there. Over went Linden, crashing through an armchair before he reached the ground. He staggered to

one knee and got in a short jolt to the chin, but Malone had him down again and Roxton's bony hand had closed upon his throat. Silas Linden had a yellow streak in him and he was cowed.

"Let up!" he cried. "That's enough!"

He lay now spread-eagled upon his back. Malone and Roxton were bending over him. Mailey had gathered himself together, pale and shaken after his fall.

"I'm all right," he cried, in answer to a feminine voice at the other side of the door. "No, not yet, dear, but we shall soon be ready for you. Now, Linden, there's no need for you to get up, for you can talk very nicely where you are. You've got to sign this paper before you leave the room."

"What is the paper?" croaked Linden, as Roxton's grip upon his throat relaxed.

"I'll read it to you."

Mailey took it from the desk and read aloud:—

"I, Silas Linden, hereby admit that I have acted as a rogue and a scoundrel by simulating to be a spirit, and I swear that I will never again in my life pretend to be a medium. Should I break this oath, then this signed confession may be used for my conviction in the police-court."

"Will you sign that?"

"No, I am damned if I will!"

"Shall I give him another squeeze?" asked Lord John Roxton. "Perhaps I could choke some sense into him—what?"

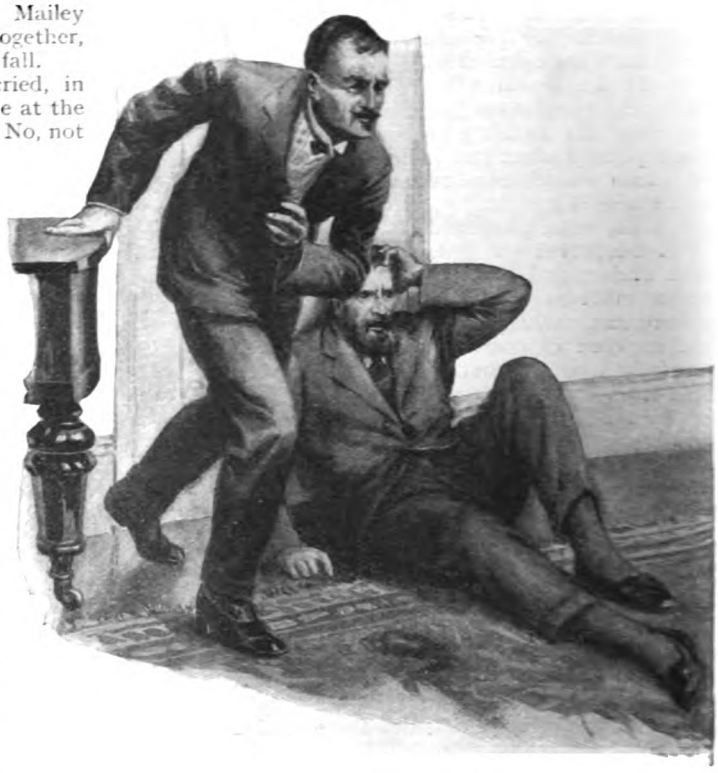
"Not at all," said Mailey. "I think that his case now would do good in the police-court, for it would show the public that we are determined to keep our house clean. I'll give you one minute for consideration, Linden, and then I ring up the police."

But it did not take a minute for the impostor to make up his mind.

"All right," said he in a sulky voice, "I'll sign."

He was allowed to rise, with a warning that if he played any tricks he would not get off so lightly the second time. But there was no kick left in him, and he scrawled a big, coarse "Silas Linden" at the bottom of the paper without a word. The three men signed as witnesses.

"Now get out!" said Mailey, sharply.



The next instant Linden was upon them. Malone, with

"Find some honest trade in future and leave sacred things alone."

"Keep your cant to yourself!" Linden answered, and so departed grumbling and swearing into the outer darkness from which he had come. He had hardly passed before Mrs. Mailey had rushed into the room to reassure herself as to her husband. Once satisfied as to this, she mourned over her broken chair, for, like all good women, she took a personal pride and joy in every detail of her little *ménage*.

"Never mind, dear. It's a cheap price to pay in order to get that blackguard out of the movement. Don't go away, you fellows. I want to talk to you."

"And tea is just coming in."

"Perhaps something stronger would be

better," said Mailey, and, indeed, all three were rather exhausted, for it was sharp while it lasted. Roxton, who had enjoyed the whole thing immensely, was full of vitality, but Malone was shaken, and Mailey

a footballer's instinct, ducked his head, and caught the prize-fighter round the knees.

had narrowly escaped serious injury from that ponderous blow.

"I have heard," said Mailey, as they all settled down round the fire, "that this blackguard has sweated money out of poor Tom Linden for years. It was a form of blackmail, for he was quite capable of denouncing him. By Jove!" he cried, with sudden inspiration, "that would account for the police raid. Why should they pick Linden out of all the mediums in London? I remember now that Tom told me the fellow had asked to be taught to be a medium, and that he had refused to teach him."

"Could he teach him?" asked Malone.

Mailey was thoughtful over this question. "Well, perhaps he could," he said at last.

"But Silas Linden as a false medium would be very much less dangerous than Silas Linden as a true medium."

"I don't follow you."

"Mediumship can be developed," said Mrs. Mailey. "One might almost say it was catching."

"That was what the laying-on of hands meant in the early Church," Mailey explained. "It was the conferring of thaumaturgic powers. We can't do it now as rapidly as that. But if a man or woman sits with the desire of development, and especially if that sitting is in the presence of a real medium, the chance is that powers will come."

"But why do you say that would be worse than false mediumship?"

"Because it could be used for evil. I assure you, Malone, that the talk of black magic and of evil entities is not an invention of the enemy. Such things do happen and centre round the wicked medium.

You can get down into a region which is akin to the popular idea of witchcraft. It is dishonest to deny it."

"Like attracts like," explained Mrs. Mailey, who was quite as capable an exponent as her husband. "You get what you deserve. If you sit with wicked people you get wicked visitors."

"Then there *is* a dangerous side to it?"

"Do you know anything on earth which has not a dangerous side if it is mishandled and exaggerated? This dangerous side exists quite apart from orthodox Spiritualism, and our knowledge is the surest way to counteract it. I believe that the witchcraft of the Middle Ages was a very real thing, and that the best way to meet such practices is to cultivate the higher powers of the spirit. To leave the thing entirely alone is to abandon the field to the forces of evil."

Roxton interposed in an unexpected way.

"When I was in Paris last year," said he, "there was a fellah called La Paix who dabbled in the black magic business. He held circles and the like. What I mean, there was no great harm in the thing, but it wasn't what you would call very spiritual, either."

"It's a side that I as a journalist should like to see something of, if I am to report impartially upon this subject," said Malone.

"Quite right!" Mailey agreed. "We want all the cards on the table."

"Well, young fellah, if you will give me a week of your time and come to Paris, I'll introduce you to La Paix," said Roxton.

"It is a curious thing, but I also had a Paris visit in my mind for our friend here," said Mailey. "I have been asked over by Dr. Maupuis, of the Institut Métapsychique, to see some of the experiments which he is conducting upon the medium Steinwein. It is really the religious side of this matter which interests me, and that is conspicuously wanting in the minds of these scientific men of the Continent; but for accurate, careful examination of the psychic facts they are ahead of anyone except poor Crawford of Belfast, who stood in a class by himself. I promised Maupuis to run across, and he has certainly been having some wonderful—in some respects, some rather alarming—results."

"Why alarming?"

"Well, his materializations lately have not been human at all. That is confirmed by photographs. I won't say more, for it is best that, if you go, you should approach it with an open mind."

"I shall certainly go," said Malone. "I am sure my Chief would wish it."

TEA had arrived to interrupt the conversation in the irritating way that our bodily needs intrude upon our higher pursuits. But Malone was too keen to be thrown off his scent.

"You speak of these evil forces. Have you ever come in contact with them?"

Mailey looked at his wife and smiled.

"Continually," he said. "It is part of our job. We specialize on it."

"I understood that when there was an intrusion of that kind you drove it away."

"Not necessarily. If we can help any lower spirit we do so, and we can only do it by encouraging it to tell us its troubles. Most of them are not wicked. They are poor ignorant stunted creatures who are suffering the effects of the narrow and false views which they have learned in this world. We try to help them—and we do."

"How do you know that you do?"

"Because they report to us afterwards and register their progress. Such methods are often used by our people. They are called 'Rescue Circles.'"

"I have heard of rescue circles. Where could I attend one? This thing attracts me more and more. Fresh gulfs seem always opening. I would take it as a great favour if you would help me to see this fresh side of it."

Mailey became thoughtful.

"We don't want to make a spectacle of these poor creatures. On the other hand, though we can hardly claim you yet as a Spiritualist, you have treated the subject with some understanding and sympathy." He looked inquiringly at his wife, who smiled and nodded.

"Ah, you have permission. Well, then, you must know that we run our own little rescue circle, and that at five o'clock to-day we have our weekly sitting. Mr. Terbane is our medium. We don't usually have anyone else except Mr. Charles Mason, the clergyman. But if you both care to have the experience, we shall be very happy if you will stay. Terbane should be here immediately after tea. He is a railway porter, you know, so his time is not his own. Yes, psychic power in its varied manifestations is found in humble quarters, but surely that has been its main characteristic from the beginning—fishermen, carpenters, tent-makers, camel drivers, these were the prophets of old. At this moment some of the highest psychic gifts in England lie in a miner, a cotton operative, a railway porter, a bargeman, and a charwoman. Thus does history repeat itself, and that foolish beak, with Tom Linden before him, was but Felix judging Paul. The old wheel goes round."

X.

DE PROFUNDIS.

THEY were still having tea when the Rev. Charles Mason was ushered in. Nothing draws people together into such intimate soul-to-soul relationship as psychic quest, and thus it was that Roxton and Malone, who had only known him in the one episode, felt more near to this man than to others with whom they had associated for years. This close, vital comradeship is one of the outstanding features of such communion. When his loosely-built, straggling, lean clerical figure, with that gaunt, worn face illuminated by its human grin and dignified by its earnest eyes, came through the doorway they both felt as if an old friend had entered. His own greeting was equally cordial.

"Still exploring!" he cried, as he shook them by the hand. "We will hope your new experiences will not be so nerve-racking as our last."

"By Jove, padre!" said Roxton, "I've worn out the brim of my hat taking it off to you since then."

"Why, what did he do?" asked Mrs. Mailey.

"No, no!" cried Mason. "I tried in my poor way to guide a darkened soul. Let us leave it at that. But that is exactly what we are here for now, and what these dear people do every week of their lives. It was from Mr. Mailey here that I learned how to attempt it."

"Well, certainly we have plenty of practice," said Mailey. "You have seen enough of it, Mason, to know that."

"But I can't get the focus of this at all!" cried Malone. "Could you clear my mind a little on the point? I accept, for the moment, your hypothesis that we are surrounded by material earth-bound spirits who find themselves under strange conditions which they don't understand, and who want counsel and guidance. That more or less expresses it, does it not?"

The Maileys both nodded their agreement.

"Well, their dead friends and relatives are presumably on the other side and cognizant of their benighted condition. They know the truth. Could they not minister to the wants of these afflicted ones far better than we can?"

"It is a most natural question," Mailey answered. "Of course we put that objection to them, and we can only accept their answer. They appear to be actually anchored to the surface of this earth, too heavy and gross to rise. The others are presumably on a spiritual level and far separated from them. They explain that they are far nearer to us and that they are cognizant of us, but not of anything higher. Therefore it is we who can reach them best."

"There was one poor dear dark soul——"

"My wife loves everybody and everything," Mailey explained. "She is capable of talking of the poor dear Devil."

"Well, surely they are to be pitied and loved!" cried the lady. "This poor fellow was nursed along by us, week by week. He had really come from the depths. Then one day he cried in rapture, 'My mother has come! My mother is here!' We naturally said, 'But why did she not come before?' 'How could she,' said he, 'when I was in so dark a place that she could not see me?'"

"That's very well," said Malone, "but so far as I can follow your methods it is some guide or control or higher spirit who regulates the whole matter and brings the sufferer to you. If he can be cognizant one would think other higher spirits could also be."

"No, for it is his particular mission," said Mailey. "To show how marked the divisions are I can remember one occasion when we had a dark soul here. Our own people came through and did not know he was there until we called their attention to it. When we said to the dark soul: 'Don't you see our friends beside you?' he answered: 'I can see a light but nothing else.'"

AT this point the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. John Terbane from Victoria Station, where his mundane duties lay. He was dressed now in civil garb and appeared as a pale, sad-faced, clean-shaven, plump-featured man with dreamy, thoughtful eyes, but no other indication of the remarkable uses to which he was put.

"Have you my record?" was his first question.

Mrs. Mailey, smiling, handed him an envelope. "We kept it all ready for you, but you can read it at home. You see," she explained, "poor Mr. Terbane is in trance and knows nothing of the wonderful work of which he is the instrument, so after each sitting my husband and I draw up an account for him."

"Very much astonished I am when I read it," said Terbane.

"And very proud, I should think," added Mason.

"Well, I don't know about that," Terbane answered humbly. "I don't see that the tool need be proud because the worker happens to use it. Yet it is a privilege, of course."

"Good old Terbane!" said Mailey, laying his hand affectionately on the railwayman's shoulder. "The better the medium the more unselfish. That is my experience. The whole conception of a medium is one who gives himself up for the use of others, and that is incompatible with selfishness. Well, I suppose we had better get to work or Mr. Chang will scold us."

"Who is he?" asked Malone.

"Oh, you will soon make the acquaintance of Mr. Chang! We need not sit round the table. A semi-circle round the fire does very well. Lights half down. That is all right. You'll make yourself comfortable, Terbane. Snuggle among the cushions."

The medium was in the corner of a comfortable sofa, and had fallen at once into a doze. Both Mailey and Malone sat with note-books upon their knees awaiting developments.

THEY were not long in coming. Terbane suddenly sat up, his dreamy self transformed into a very alert and masterful individuality. A subtle change had passed over his face. An ambiguous smile fluttered upon his lips, his eyes seemed more oblique and less open, his face projected. The two hands were thrust into the sleeves of his blue lounge jacket.

"Good evening," said he, speaking crisply and in short staccato sentences. "New faces! Who these?"

"Good evening, Chang," said the master of the house. "You know Mr. Mason. This is Mr. Malone, who studies our subject. This is Lord John Roxton, who has helped me to-day."

As each name was mentioned Terbane made a sweeping Oriental gesture of greeting, bringing his hands down from his forehead. His whole bearing was superbly dignified and very different from the humble little man who had sat down a few minutes before.

"Lord John Roxton!" he repeated. "An English milord! I knew Lord—Lord Macart—no! I cannot say it. Alas! I called him 'foreign devil' then. Chang, too, had much to learn."

"He is speaking of Lord Macartney. That would be about seventy years ago. Chang was a great living philosopher then," Mailey explained.

"Not lose time!" cried the control. "Much to do to-day! Crowd waiting. Some new, some old. I gather strange folk in my net. Now I go." He sank back among the cushions.

A minute elapsed, then he suddenly sat up.

"I want to thank you," he said, speaking perfect English. "I came two weeks ago. I have thought over all you said. The path is lighter."

"Were you the spirit who did not believe in God?"

"Yes, yes! I said so in my anger. I was so weary—so weary. Oh, the time, the endless time, the grey mist, the heavy weight of remorse! Hopeless! Hopeless! And you brought me comfort, you and this great Chinese spirit. You gave me the first kind words I have had since I died."

"When was it that you died?"

"Oh! It seems an eternity. We do not measure as you do. It is a long, horrible dream without change or break."

"Who was King in England?"

"Victoria was Queen. I had attuned my mind to matter, and so it clung to matter. I did not believe in a future life. Now I know that I was all wrong, but I could not adapt my mind to new conditions."

"Is it bad where you are?"

"It is all—all grey. That is the awful part of it. One's surroundings are so horrible."

"But there are many more. You are not alone."

"No, but they know no more than I. They, too, scoff and doubt and are miserable."

"You will soon get out."

"For God's sake, help me to do so!"

"Poor soul!" said Mrs. Mailey in her sweet, caressing voice, a voice which could bring every animal to her side. "You have suffered much. But do not think of yourself. Think of these others. Try to bring one of them up and so you will best help yourself."

"Thank you, lady, I will. There is one here whom I brought. He has heard you. We will go on together. Perhaps some day we may find the light."

"Do you like to be prayed for?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I do!"

"I will pray for you," said Mason. "Could you say the 'Our Father' now?" He uttered the old universal prayer, but before he had finished Terbane had collapsed again among the cushions. He sat up again as Chang.

"He come on well," said the control. "He give up time for others who wait. That is good. Now I have hard case. Ow!"

He gave a comical cry of disapprobation and sank back.

Next moment he was up, his face long and solemn.

"What is this?" he asked in a precise and affected voice. "I am at a loss to know what right this Chinese person has

to summon me here. Perhaps you can enlighten me."

"It is that we may perhaps help you."

"When I desire help, sir, I ask for it. At present I do not desire it. The whole proceeding seems to me to be a very great liberty. So far as this Chinaman can explain it, I gather that I am the involuntary spectator of some sort of religious service."

"We are a spiritualistic circle."

"A most pernicious sect. A most blasphemous proceeding. I protest against such desecrations."

"You are held back, friend, by those narrow views. It is you who suffer. We want to relieve you."

"Suffer? What do you mean, sir?"

"You realize that you have passed over?"

"You are talking nonsense!"

"Do you realize that you are dead?"

"How can I be dead when I am talking to you?"

"Because you are using this man's body."

"I have certainly wandered into an asylum."

"Yes, an asylum for bad cases. I fear you are one of them. Are you happy where you are?"

"Happy? No, sir. My present surroundings are perfectly inexplicable to me."

"Have you any recollection of being ill?"

"I was very ill indeed."

"So ill that you died."

"You are certainly out of your senses."

"How do you know you are not dead?"

"Sir, I must give you some religious instruction. When one dies and has led an honourable life one assumes a glorified body and one associates with the angels. I am now in exactly the same body as in life, and I am in a very dull, drab place. Such companions as I have are not such as I have been accustomed to associate with in life, and certainly no one could describe them as angels. Therefore, your absurd conjecture may be dismissed."

"Do not continue to deceive yourself. We wish to help you. You can never progress until you realize your position."

"Really, you try my patience too far. Have I not said——?"

THE medium fell back among the cushions. An instant later the Chinese control, with his whimsical smile and his hands tucked away in his sleeves, was talking to the circle.

"He good man—fool man—learn sense soon. Bring him again. Not waste more time. Oh, my God! My God! Help! Mercy! Help!"

He had fallen full length upon the sofa, face upwards, and his cries were so terrible that the little audience all sprang to their feet. "A saw! A saw! Fetch a saw!" yelled the medium. His voice sank into a moan.

Even Mailey was agitated. The rest were horrified.

"Someone has obsessed him. I can't understand it. It may be some strong evil entity."

"Shall I speak to him?" asked Mason.

"Wait a moment! Let it develop. We shall soon see."

The medium writhed in agony. "Oh, my God! Why don't you fetch a saw?" he cried. "It's here, across my breastbone. It is cracking! I feel it! Hawkin! Hawkin! Pull me from under! Hawkin! Push up the beam! No, no, that's worse! And it's on fire! Oh, horrible! horrible!"

His cries were blood-curdling. They were all chilled with horror. Then in an instant the Chinaman was blinking at them with his slanting eyes.

"What you think of that, Mister Mailey?"

"It was terrible, Chang. What was it?"

"It was for him," nodding towards Malone. "He want newspaper story, I give him newspaper story. He will understand. No time 'splain now. Too many waiting. Sailor man come next. Here he come!"

The Chinaman was gone and a jovial, puzzled grin passed over the face of the medium. He scratched his head.

"Well, blow me!" said he. "I never thought I would take orders from a Chink, but he says 'Hist!' and, by crums, you've got to hist and no back talk, either. Well, here I am. What did you want?"

"We wanted nothing."

"Well, the Chink seemed to think you did, for he slung me in here."

"It was you that wanted something. You wanted knowledge."

"Well, I've lost my bearings, that's true. I know I am dead 'cause I've seen the gunnery lootenant and he was blown to bits before my eyes. If he's dead I'm dead, and all the rest of us, for we are over to the last man. But we've got the laugh on our skypilot, for he's as puzzled as the rest of us. Mighty poor pilot, I call him. We're all taking our own soundings now."

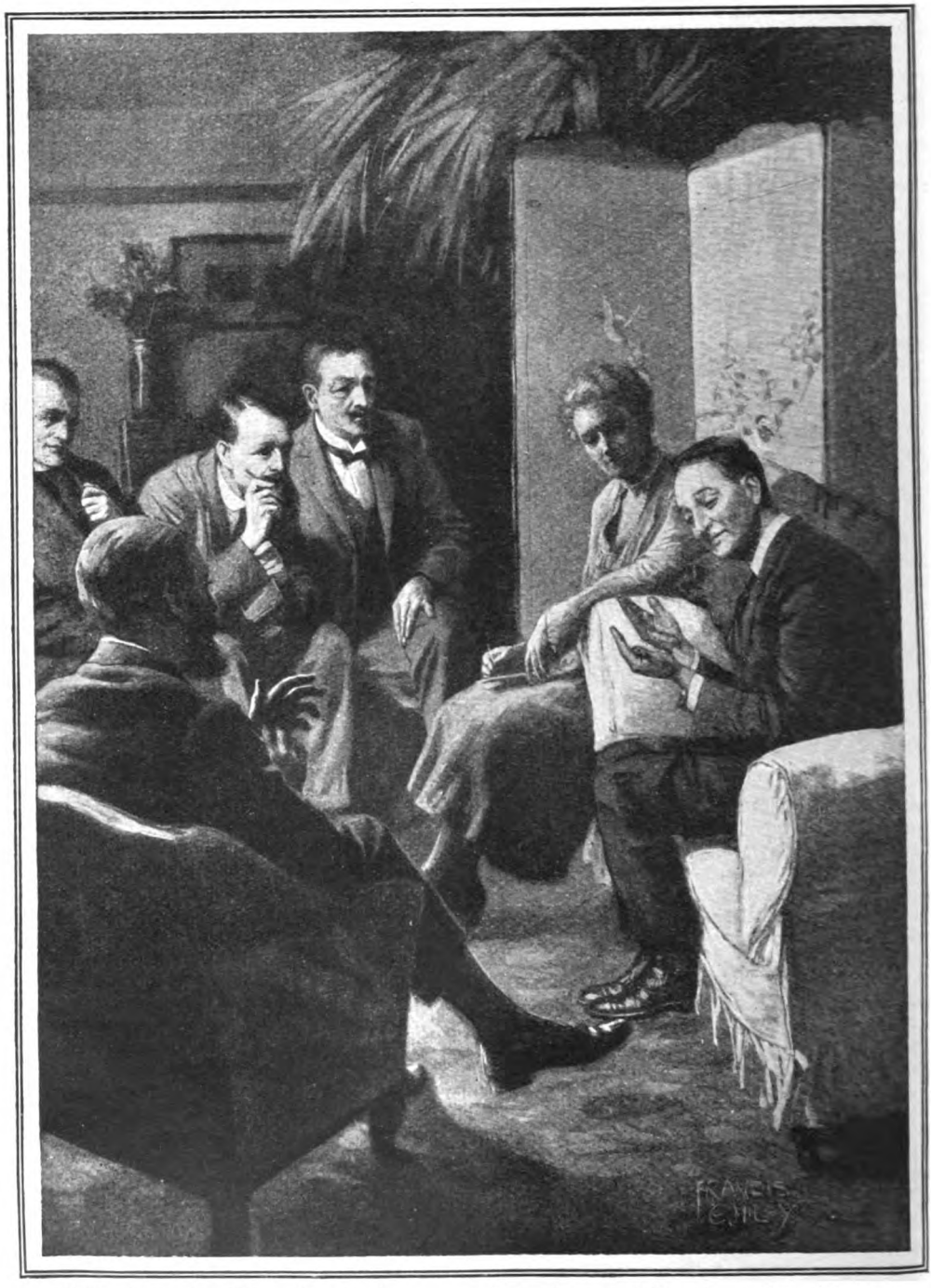
"What was your ship?"

"The *Monmouth*."

"She that went down in battle with the German?"

"That's right. South American waters. It was clean hell. Yes, it was hell." There was a world of emotion in his voice. "Well," he added, more cheerfully, "I've heard our mates got level with them later. That is so, sir, is it not?"

"Yes; they all went to the bottom."



"Good evening, Chang," said the master of the house. "You know Mr. Mason. This is Mr. Malone, who studies our subject. This is Lord John Roxton." As each name was mentioned Terbane made a sweeping Oriental gesture of greeting.

" We've seen nothing of them this side. Just as well, maybe. We don't forget nothing."

" But you must," said Mailey. " That's what is the matter with you. That is why the Chinese control brought you through. We are here to teach you. Carry our message to your mates."

" Bless your heart, sir, they are all here behind me."

" Well, then, I tell you and them that the time for hard thoughts and worldly strife is over. Your faces are to be turned forward, not back. Leave this earth, which still holds you by the ties of thought, and let all your desire be to make yourself unselfish and worthy of a higher, more peaceful, more beautiful life. Can you understand ? "

" I hear you, sir. So do they. We want steering, sir, for, indeed, we've had wrong instructions and we never expected to find ourselves cast away like this. We had heard of heaven and we had heard of hell, but this don't seem to fit in with either. But this Chinese gent says time is up, and we can report again next week. I thank you, sir, for self and company. I'll come again."

There was silence.

" WHAT an incredible conversation ! " gasped Malone. " If I were to put down that man's sailor talk and slang as emanating from a world of spirits, what would the public say ? "

Mailey shrugged his shoulders.

" Does it matter what the public says ? I started as a fairly sensitive person, and now a tank takes as much notice of small shot as I do of newspaper attacks. They honestly don't even interest me. Let us just stick fast to truth as near as we can get it, and leave all else to find its own level."

" I don't pretend to know much of these things," said Roxton, " but what strikes me most is that these folk are very decent ordinary people. What ! Why should they be wanderin' about in the dark, and hauled up here by this Chinaman, when they've done no partic'lar harm in life ? "

" It is the strong earth tie and the absence of any spiritual nexus in each case," Mailey explained. " Here is a theologian with his mind entangled with formulas and ritual. Here is a materialist who has deliberately attuned himself to matter. Here is a seaman brooding over revengeful thoughts. They are there by the million million."

" Where ? " asked Malone.

" Here," Mailey answered. " Actually on the surface of the earth. Well, you saw it for yourself, I understand, when you went down to Dorsetshire. That was on the surface, was it not ? That was a very gross case, and that made it more visible and obvious, but it did not change the general law. I believe that the whole globe is infested with the earth-bound, and that when a great cleansing comes, as is prophesied, it will be for their benefit as much as for that of the living."

Malone thought of the strange visionary Miromar and his speech at the Spiritualistic Church on the first night of his quest.

" Do you then believe in some impending event ? " he asked.

Mailey smiled. " This is rather a large subject to open up," he said. " I believe—but here is Mr. Chang again ! "

The control joined in the conversation.

" I heard you. I sit and listen," said he. " You speak now of what is to come. Let it be ! Let it be ! The Time is not yet. You will be told when it is good that you know. Remember this. All is best. Whatever come all is best. God makes no mistakes. Now others here who wish your help, I leave you."

Several spirits came through in quick succession. One was an architect who said that he had lived at Bristol. He had not been an evil man, but had simply banished all thoughts of the future. Now he was in the dark and needed guidance. Another had lived in Birmingham. He was an educated man, but a materialist. He refused to accept the assurances of Mailey, and was by no means convinced that he was really dead. Then came a very noisy and violent man of a crudely-religious Plymouth Brother type.

" What is this ribald nonsense ? " he asked several times.

" It is not nonsense. We are here to help," said Mailey.

" Who wants to be helped by the Devil ? "

" Is it likely that the Devil would wish to help souls in trouble ? "

" It is part of his deceit. I tell you it in of the Devil ! Be warned ! I will take no further part in it."

The placid, whimsical Chinaman was back like a flash. " Good man. Foolish man," he repeated once more. " Plenty time. He learn better some day. Now I bring bad case—very bad case. Ow ! "

He reclined his head in the cushion and did not raise it as the voice, a feminine voice, broke out :—

" Janet ! Janet ! "

There was a pause.

" Janet, I say ! Where is the morning tea ? Janet ! This is intolerable ! I have called you again and again ! Janet ! " The figure sat up blinking and rubbing his eyes.

" What is this ? " cried the voice. " Who

are you? What right have you here? Are you aware that this is my house?"

"No, friend, this is my house."

"Your house! How can it be your house when this is my bedroom? Go away this moment!"

"No, friend. You do not understand your position."

"I will have you put out. What insolence! Janet! Janet! Will no one look after me this morning?"

"Look round you, lady. Is this your bedroom?"

Terbane looked round with a wild stare.

"It is a room I never saw in my life. Where am I? What is the meaning of it? You look like a kind lady. Tell me, for God's sake, what is the meaning of it? Oh, I am so terrified! So terrified! Where are John and Janet?"

"What do you last remember?"

"I remember speaking severely to Janet. She is my maid, you know. She has become so very careless. Yes, I was very angry with her. I was so angry that I was ill. I went to bed feeling very ill. They told me that I should not get excited. How can one help getting excited? Yes, I remember being breathless. That was after the light was out. I tried to call Janet. But why should I be in another room?"

"You passed over in the night."

"Passed over? Do you mean I died?"

"Yes, lady, you died."

THERE was a long silence. Then there came a shrill scream. "No, no, no! It is a dream! A nightmare! Wake me! Wake me! How can I be dead? I was not ready to die! I never thought of such a thing. If I am dead, why am I not in heaven or hell? What is this room? This room is a real room."

"Yes, lady, you have been brought here and allowed to use this man's body——"

"A man?" She convulsively felt the coat and passed her hand over the face. "Yes, it is a man. Oh, I am dead! I am dead! What shall I do?"

"You are here that we may explain to you. You have been, I judge, a worldly woman—a society woman. You have lived always for material things."

"I went to church. I was at St. Saviour's every Sunday."

"That is nothing. It is the inner daily life that counts. You were material. Now you are held down to the world. When you leave this man's body you will be in your own body once more and in your old surroundings. But no one will see you. You will remain there unable to show yourself. Your body of flesh will be buried. You will still persist, the same as ever."

"What am I to do? Oh, what can I do?"

"You will take what comes in a good spirit and understand that it is for your cleansing. We only clear ourselves of matter by suffering. All will be well. We will pray for you."

"Oh, do! Oh, I need it so! Oh, my God!——" The voice tailed away.

"Bad case," said the Chinaman, sitting up. "Selfish woman! Bad woman! Live for pleasure. Hard on those around her. She have much to suffer. But you put her feet on the path. Now my medium tired. Plenty waiting, but no more to-day."

"Have we done good, Chang?"

"Plenty good. Plenty good."

"Where are all these people, Chang?"

"I tell you before."

"Yes, but I want these gentlemen to hear."

"Seven spheres round the world, heaviest below, lightest above. First sphere is on the earth. These people belong to that sphere. Each sphere is separate from the other. Therefore it is easier for you to speak with these people than for those in any other sphere."

"And easier for them to speak to us?"

"Yes. That why you should be plenty careful when you do not know to whom you talk. Try the spirits."

"What sphere do you belong to, Chang?"

"I come from Number Four sphere."

"Which is the first really happy sphere?"

"Number Three. Summerland. Bible book called it the third heaven. Plenty sense in Bible book, but people do not understand."

"And the seventh heaven?"

"Ah! That is where the Christs are. All come there at last—you, me, everybody."

"And after that?"

"Too much question, Mr. Mailey. Poor old Chang not know so much as that. Now good-bye! God bless you! I go."

It was the end of the sitting of the rescue circle. A few minutes later Terbane was sitting up smiling and alert, but with no apparent recollection of anything which had occurred. He was pressed for time and lived afar, so that he had to make his departure, unpaid save by the blessing of those whom he had helped. Modest little unvenal man, where will he stand when we all find our real places in the order of creation upon the further side?

THE circle did not break up at once. The visitors wanted to talk and the Maileys to listen.

"What I mean," said Roxton, "it's doosed interestin' and all that, but there is a sort of variety-show element in it. What!

Mailey burst into the room, without a word seated himself beside Malone, and began to read.

Difficult to be sure it's really real, if you take what I mean."

"That is what I feel also," said Malone. "Of course on its face value it is simply unspeakable. It is a thing so great that all ordinary happenings become commonplace. That I grant. But the human mind is very strange. I've read that case Moreton Prince examined, and Miss Beauchamp and the rest; also the results of Charcot, the great Nancy hypnotic school. They could turn a man into anything. The mind seems to be like a rope which can be unravelled into its various threads. Then each thread is a different personality which may take dramatic form, and act and speak as such. That man is honest, and he could not normally. produce these effects. But how do we know that he is not self-hypnotized and that under those conditions one strand of him becomes Mr. Chang and another becomes a sailor and another a society lady, and so forth?"

Mailey laughed. "Every man his own Cinquevalli," said he, "but it is a rational objection and has to be met."

"We have traced some of the cases," said

Mrs. Mailey. "There is not a doubt of it—names, addresses, everything."

"Well, then we have to consider the question of Terbane's normal knowledge. How can you possibly know what he has learned? I should think a railway porter is particularly able to pick up such information."

"You have seen one sitting," Mailey answered. "If you had been present at as many as we and noted the cumulative effect of the evidence you would not be sceptical."

"That is very possible," Malone answered. "And I dare say my doubts are very annoying to you. And yet one is bound to be brutally honest in a case like this. Anyhow, whatever the ultimate cause, I have seldom spent so thrilling an hour. Heavens! If it only *is* true, and if you had a thousand circles instead of one, what regeneration would result!"

"That will come," said Mailey in his patient, determined fashion. "We shall live to see it. I am sorry the thing has not forced conviction upon you. However, you must come again."

BUT it so chanced that a further experience became unnecessary. Conviction came in a full flood and in a strange fashion that very evening. Malone had hardly got back to the office, and was seated at his desk drawing up some sort of account from his notes of all that had happened in the afternoon, when Mailey burst into the room, his yellow beard bristling with excitement. He was waving an *Evening News* in his hand. Without a word he seated himself beside Malone and turned the paper over. Then he began to read:—

ACCIDENT IN THE CITY.

This afternoon, shortly after five o'clock, an old house, said to date from the fifteenth century, suddenly collapsed. It was situated between Lesser Colman Street and Elliott Square and next door to the Veterinary Society's headquarters. Some preliminary crackings warned the occupants, and most of them had time to escape. Three of them, however, James Beale, William Moorson, and a woman whose name has not been ascertained, were caught by the falling rubbish. Two of these seem to have perished at once, but the third, James Beale, was pinned down by a large beam and loudly demanded help. A saw was brought, and one of the occupants of the house, Samuel Hawkin, showed great gallantry in an attempt to free the unfortunate man. Whilst he was sawing the beam, however, a fire broke out among the débris around him, and though he persevered most manfully, and continued until he was himself badly scorched, it was impossible for him to save Beale, who probably died from suffocation. Hawkin was removed to the London Hospital, and it is reported to-night that he is in no immediate danger.

"That's that!" said Mailey, folding up the paper. "Now, Mr. Thomas Didymus, I leave you to your conclusions," and the enthusiast vanished out of the office as precipitately as he had entered.

The incidents recorded in this chapter are all drawn from close personal observation or else founded upon the records of reliable investigators. A number of parallel cases will be found in the appendix of Admiral Usborne Moore's "Glimpses of the Next State." The incident where the victim of an accident recorded his experience at the moment of passing is drawn from the record of Mr. Randall, barrister-at-law, of Buffalo, who has done more of this rescue work than any other observer.—A. C. D

(*To be continued.*)

The Art of Public Speaking

1. ADVOCACY

By

THE RIGHT HON.

THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD, P.C.

THE art of advocacy is one of the most esteemed in the world; and it is one of the most ancient. The object of advocacy is to press upon those whom you address a certain point of view so persuasively that it is in the result adopted. It does not in the least matter what the subject matter may be. You may be a lawyer pleading before a judge; you may be a statesman defending the existence of your Government before an unsympathetic House of Commons; or you may be a musician arguing on behalf of musical heresies before an orthodox musical audience.

In all these cases the same qualities are required of a great advocate. So vital are the rewards which await him who in any one of these fields becomes the master of the golden gift, that it is worth while analysing the qualities which are necessary for the production of a really great advocate.

The qualities of advocacy do not vary from generation to generation. The great masters of the art, Demosthenes, Cicero, Chatham, Burke, and Erskine, have left examples of incredible modernity. If any man read and re-read so that he has mastered the speeches of these illustrious models he will need no other guide to the employment of noble and majestic language harnessed to the purposes of high advocacy. But it would still be necessary for him to master the technique of public speech. Burke did not possess it; and therefore superb orations, acclaimed by all succeeding ages, were delivered in an almost empty House of Commons, from which all had fled except those who themselves desired, in succession to the orator, to catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

It should, perhaps, be premised, what was pointed out by the philosophical wisdom of Tacitus, that it is only in a democracy that the qualities of rhetoric meet with their reward. Autocrats have no use for orators. The most admirable gifts of rhetoric were, for instance, no recommendation to the late Kaiser, his general staff, or his entourage taken as a whole. Blood and iron are ill adapted comrades for the persuasiveness of the spoken word. In view of the surprising political experiences in Italy in the last few years, that man would be rash who claimed that the rule of democracy had been asserted over the world in final and unalterable terms. But if and so long as democracy does not so far abuse the very system from which it draws its life blood, we may, at least, for the purpose of this article, adapt our observations to a state of affairs in which democracy is still supreme.

In such conditions the gift of speech is, on the whole, if allied to other and more solid qualities, the one supreme gift which may bring a man of obscure antecedents to the highest position in the State. By this gift he may obtain a constituency; by it (if he possesses it in a high measure) he may

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dominate the House of Commons *sic itur ad astra*. Someone after all in this country of ours, as in every other country, must be Prime Minister. It is becoming increasingly more difficult for a man to discharge the duties of this high office unless he possesses the power of making audible among his fellow-countrymen the force of the spoken word. Such a man must learn to project his personality over the footlights.

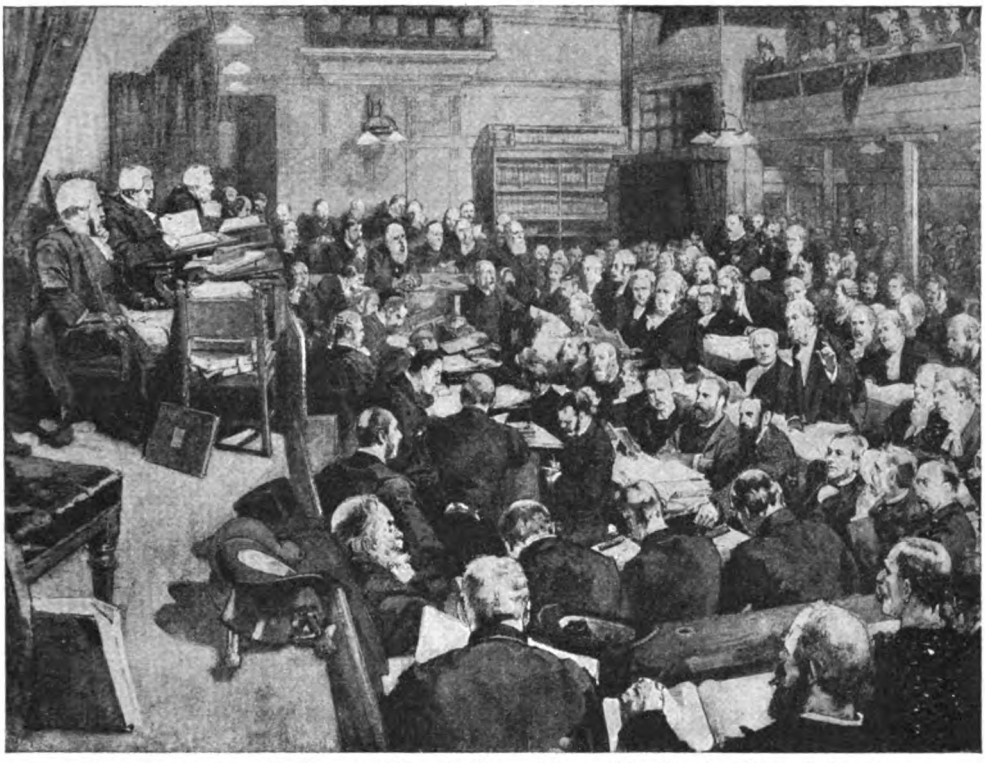
The art of advocacy, as I have already made plain, is not confined to any particular topic, still less to any particular sphere. Eloquence may be found round a dinner table, or in a library, just as, if more amply exerted, it may dominate a vast assembly in the Albert Hall. The connection between eloquence and advocacy is apparent. Eloquence is the gift of speech which, more than any other, equips the advocate to achieve his primary purpose, namely, to persuade. What, then, is eloquence? Here we approach a question which has been discussed by the most subtle brains in ancient and modern civilization. In a general definition, I should describe it as the faculty of presenting a point of view, whether argumentative or emotional, in such language and by such gifts of articulate expression as produce a great persuasive effect upon the minds of the audience, whatever that audience may be.

Sir Charles Russell—afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen—"must be accounted, after Lord Erskine, almost the most successful and forceful of British advocates."

Evidently, then, a great advocate will almost always be eloquent in the sense in which I have attempted to define eloquence. But there have, nevertheless, been very considerable advocates, especially in the field of the Law, who have not been eloquent in the ordinary sense. Such a man was the late Lord Justice Holker, at one time almost the most formidable advocate at the Bar, and the equal rival of the late Lord Russell of Killowen. He substituted for the gifts of speech a stocky and imperturbable personality; a quality of homely humour; and an immense familiarity with the facts of the particular case which engaged his faculties at the moment.

Such cases are exceptional, and as I look back on the history of the English Bar—to which, after all, we must look for our greatest advocates—I place far the first the name of the illustrious Erskine. His speeches satisfied the most exacting double test which can be applied to legal or, indeed, to any other oratory. He completely dominated the audience which he immediately addressed; and his speeches can, nevertheless, still be read and enjoyed by those who appreciate the incomparably rare gift of harmonizing spoken and written rhetoric. And yet this orator, incomparable at the Bar, was a failure both in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords. The brilliancy of his success outside Parliament brought into even more damaging relief his failure within. When he made his maiden speech in the House of Commons, such was his reputation that Pitt himself, taking careful notes, was in attendance to make the reply. After a quarter of an hour he closed his note-book and left the House, observing: "There is nothing to reply to here." Nor was the career of this illustrious advocate more distinguished when, as Lord High Chancellor, he presided over the House of Lords. He would, indeed, have been a greater figure in the records of British oratory if he had never entered either the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

I should suppose that after Lord Erskine, Lord Russell of Killowen must be accounted almost the most successful and forceful of



A scene during the famous Parnell Commission—Sir Charles Russell (on the right—standing) and Richard Pigott (in witness-box). Under Russell's merciless cross-examination Pigott broke down utterly.

British advocates. He had intense force of personality; a voluble, even a tempestuous gift of speech; a great power of sarcasm, and a pachydermatous nature. He rode rough-shod over juries, witnesses, and judges. He was utterly indifferent to personal abuse; even to personal insult. I suspect that stronger judges and stronger opponents at the Bar would not have tolerated his methods of advocacy. I do not think that either Lord Carson or myself would have been unwilling to cross swords with him. The literary quality of all his speeches was almost contemptible. None of them can be read without impatience. He aimed only at the temporary and fugitive effect, caring nothing what the reader five years hence night think of the quality of his speech. And, indeed, he had, I imagine, acuteness enough to be certain that no one five years afterwards could conceivably be capable of reading his speeches.

Very different were the methods of his great rival, Sir Edward Clarke, still happily among us, and still universally recognized, even in retirement, as the *doyen* of the English Bar. I suspect that this great and restrained advocate modelled himself very closely upon Erskine. He never made a speech in an important criminal matter which was not a model alike of spoken and of written rhetoric. He has published—and has been abundantly justified in publishing—most of his important forensic speeches. I cannot do a greater service to young men who are addressing themselves to a career at the Bar than to recommend them to read and re-read the speeches of Lord Erskine and of Sir Edward Clarke in cases of grave legal consequence.

I must, however, while recognizing that naturally enough the greatest masters of advocacy have belonged to the legal profession, not neglect the larger aspects of a topic which affects the whole of human life. I have already made it plain that the object of an advocate must be to persuade, and that it is quite unimportant whether his audience is domestic, public, forensic, or scientific. A man who is eloquent in one sphere ought to be, and can become, eloquent in all.

Are there, then, any general rules which can be laid down upon a subject so difficult

The Great Turf Fraud Case at the Old Bailey in 1877, in which four well-known detectives and a solicitor were charged with conspiring to defeat the ends of justice. Mr. (now Sir) Edward Clarke making his speech in defence of one of the five prisoners—the only one found "Not Guilty."

and so complex, which may be of service to beginners? I think that there are. Let me attempt to offer some elementary advice.

In the first place, an advocate must satisfy himself with the most absolute precision of that which he intends to recommend. No labour, no premeditation can be excessive in order to attain this first condition precedent of successful advocacy.

The speaker must eliminate everything which is secondary, and *a fortiori* everything which is irrelevant to his main topic. Unless he clearly realizes the message which he has to give, and the greatest attainable economy in time and language with which he can convey it, it is extremely unlikely that any audience will appreciate his exertions: you have made a great beginning if as a result of a severe analysis you understand quite clearly the point you are concerned to make.

Having, then, completely clarified his own mind (this is the first essential) as to the message which he proposes to deliver, he must address himself to the language in which he proposes to make it persuasive. But let this point once again be emphasized: the subject-matter of the speech, whatever the topic, must, before he even begins to think of the language in which it is to be expressed, be logically and inevitably plain to his own mind.

When it has become completely plain, he may invoke the literary, illustrative, and ironical powers which he possesses to impress his point of view upon his audience in such a manner as to make it seem irresistible. No young speaker can prepare his speech too carefully. It is an impertinence for a young and inexperienced man to suppose that he can improvise speeches likely to instruct or amuse those who are older and wiser than himself. It is reported of Demosthenes that, in order to correct an imperfect articulation, he used to splutter undelivered speeches with pebbles in his mouth. I give no voucher for either the story or the prescription, but it may serve to point a moral, that he who would master the secret of high oratory must neglect no

method, however tiresome, which may improve his faculty for technical expression.

And always the student who, at the price of high endeavour, is determined to gain a permanent success must model himself upon high examples.

It will be well worth his while to analyse the arguments gradually deployed in the private speeches of Demosthenes; and he will certainly not waste his time if he takes the Philippics of Cicero (as I did once) and makes a *résumé*, putting upon one side all that was solid in argument, and upon another all that consisted of invective and of rhetorical reinforcement.

Invective, too, has itself no inconsiderable part in the equipment of a perfect orator. Here the Letters of Junius may be usefully and conscientiously studied; nor should the speeches of Benjamin Disraeli delivered in youth against Sir Robert Peel be neglected. And to him who has a knowledge of the Latin language, the Satires of Juvenal will afford material for reflection, and, it may be, *longum post interverallum*, may suggest a mordant phrase.

These occasional hints, which perhaps I may be afforded the opportunity of developing in a later article, enable me, for the purpose of this, to attempt a summary of the counsels which I offer. (1) He who would persuade others should (if it is by any means possible) believe in the cause which he pleads. (2) In legal matters this counsel of perfection is not always attainable, therefore he must do his best without it. (3) Before he begins to speak he must completely understand his thesis, and the order and logic of its presentation. (4) He must present it with every gift of the rhetorical art with which his education and cultivation have equipped him. Sympathy, humanity, irony, invective, emotion: all will contribute congruously to the evolution of the technique of the perfect orator. Such a one can easily be conceived of who has inherited great natural gifts: such a one will not do justice to those gifts unless he reinforces them by intense study of the facts of every problem which he examines, and unless he has lent them quality by a close and zealous study of the masters of classical and English advocacy as expressed both in written and in spoken eloquence.

And one other word of practical advice may be added. I have laid stress upon the importance of careful preparation. To beginners this advice is of the first importance. But of course it must be realized that men are often called upon to make important speeches in circumstances which render elaborate preparation impossible. The art of spontaneous debate throws a speaker upon the resources of the moment. How far he succeeds will depend upon the readiness of his tongue and wit; but even more upon the value and substance of that which is stored in his mind. Whilst, therefore, I advise young men to think out beforehand all their important speeches, I counsel them equally never to neglect, upon occasions less critical, the practice of extempore speech. The art must be acquired, and can be acquired, of thinking aloud with as little embarrassment and as little confusion as one thinks to oneself.

Next month the Rt. Hon. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., will write on Parliamentary speaking, and Dean Inge on Preaching.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 148.

Two well-known places, one on either side,
Both of them English, here can be descried.
Trade will recall one subject for our rhymes,
The other name will tell of Roman times.

1. If, meaning part, 'tis fair the whole to say,
   Write Middlesex, with Surrey sent away.
2. Add head and tail to this and quadruped:
   Two synonyms of equal length are read.
3. Divide a biscuit; this, if rightly done,
   Should give the word you want, and with it one.
4. Whole played a part in famous tragedy;
   The central third is all that here we see.
5. Take one from one, and write what then remains;
   Contingency, we notice, it contains.
6. A life was saved by woman's love and wit.
   Hood should supply a key to solving it.
7. Observe the capitals, an upright pair.
   Now there is little more than ruins there.
8. Beef (may we say?) was high, Laughter was heard,
   'Twas then Romance was born—and this occurred.
9. The idler's home, on which depends the race.
   One letter island here has out of place.
10. First choose, then change the head of, Spanish town.
    Lastly, her other, longer, name write down.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 148 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on November 10th.

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 147.
(The Third of the Series.)

1. C	ogna	C
2. R	ove	R
3. I	ncognit	O
4. C	la	Q
5. K	osoi	U
6. E	liminat	E
7. T	ouris	T

NOTES.—Light 2. The Jolly Roger, Sir Roger de Coverley. 4. Claque. Clique is equally good. 5. Kosciusko. Campbell, The Pleasures of Hope, part 1. 6. Eliminate mina, elite. 7. Tourist, tour; The excursion, To Uri.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

The Interruption

By

W. W. JACOBS

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

I.

THE last of the funeral guests had gone and Spencer Goddard, in decent black, sat alone in his small, well-furnished study. There was a queer sense of freedom in the house since the coffin had left it; the coffin which was now hidden in its solitary grave beneath the yellow earth. The air, which for the last three days had seemed stale and contaminated, now smelt fresh and clean. He went to the open window and, looking into the fading light of the autumn day, took a deep breath.

He closed the window and, stooping down, put a match to the fire, and, dropping into his easy chair, sat listening to the cheery crackle of the wood. At the age of thirty-eight he had turned over a fresh page. Life, free and unencumbered, was before him. His dead wife's money was at last his, to spend as he pleased instead of being doled out in reluctant driblets.

He turned at a step at the door and his face assumed the appearance of gravity and sadness it had worn for the last four days. The cook, with the same air of decorous grief, entered the room quietly and, crossing to the mantelpiece, placed upon it a photograph.

"I thought you'd like to have it, sir," she said, in a low voice, "to remind you."

Goddard thanked her, and, rising, took it in his hand and stood regarding it. He noticed with satisfaction that his hand was absolutely steady.

"It is a very good likeness—till she was taken ill," continued the woman. "I never saw anybody change so sudden."

"The nature of her disease, Hannah," said her master.

The woman nodded, and, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief, stood regarding him.

"Is there anything you want?" he inquired, after a time.

She shook her head. "I can't believe she's gone," she said, in a low voice. "Every now and then I have a queer feeling that she's still here——"

"It's your nerves," said her master, sharply.

"——and wanting to tell me something."

By a great effort Goddard refrained from looking at her.

"Nerves," he said again. "Perhaps you ought to have a little holiday. It has been a great strain upon you."

"You, too, sir," said the woman, respectfully. "Waiting on her hand and foot as you have done, I can't think how you stood it. If you'd only had a nurse——"

"I preferred to do it myself, Hannah," said her master. "If I had had a nurse it would have alarmed her."

The woman assented. "And they are always peeking and prying into what doesn't concern them," she added. "Always think they know more than the doctors do."

Goddard turned a slow look upon her. The tall, angular figure was standing in an attitude of respectful attention; the cold slaty-brown eyes were cast down, the sullen face expressionless.

"She couldn't have had a better doctor," he said, looking at the fire again. "No man could have done more for her."

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" And nobody could have done more for her than you did, sir," was the reply. " There's few husbands that would have done what you did."

Goddard stiffened in his chair. " That will do, Hannah," he said, curtly.

" Or done it so well," said the woman, with measured slowness.

With a strange, sinking sensation, her master paused to regain his control. Then he turned and eyed her steadily. " Thank you," he said, slowly ; " you mean well, but at present I cannot discuss it."

FOR some time after the door had closed behind her he sat in deep thought. The feeling of well-being of a few minutes before had vanished, leaving in its place an apprehension which he refused to consider, but which would not be allayed. He thought over his actions of the last few weeks, carefully, and could remember no flaw. His wife's illness, the doctor's diagnosis, his own solicitous care, were all in keeping with the ordinary. He tried to remember the woman's exact words—her manner. Something had shown him Fear. What ?

He could have laughed at his fears next morning. The dining-room was full of sunshine and the fragrance of coffee and bacon was in the air. Better still, a worried and commonplace Hannah. Worried over two eggs with false birth-certificates, over the vendor of which she became almost lyrical.

" The bacon is excellent," said her smiling master, " so is the coffee ; but your coffee always is."

Hannah smiled in return, and, taking fresh eggs from a rosy-cheeked maid, put them before him.

A pipe, followed by a brisk walk, cheered him still further. He came home glowing with exercise and again possessed with that sense of freedom and freshness. He went into the garden—now his own—and planned alterations.

After lunch he went over the house. The windows of his wife's bedroom were open and the room neat and airy. His glance wandered from the made-up bed to the brightly-polished furniture. Then he went to the dressing-table and opened the drawers, searching each in turn. With the exception of a few odds and ends they were empty. He went out on to the landing and called for Hannah.

" Do you know whether your mistress locked up any of her things ? " he inquired.

" What things ? " said the woman.

" Well, her jewellery mostly."

" Oh ! " Hannah smiled. " She gave it all to me," she said, quietly.

Goddard checked an exclamation. His heart was beating nervously, but he spoke sternly.

" When ? "

" Just before she died—of gastro-enteritis," said the woman.

There was a long silence. He turned and with great care mechanically closed the drawers of the dressing-table. The tilted glass showed him the pallor of his face, and he spoke without turning round.

" That is all right, then," he said, huskily. " I only wanted to know what had become of it. I thought, perhaps, Milly——"

Hannah shook her head. " Milly's all right," she said, with a strange smile. " She's as honest as we are. Is there anything more you want, sir ? "

She closed the door behind her with the quietness of the well-trained servant; Goddard, steadying himself with his hand on the rail of the bed, stood looking into the future.

II.

THE days passed monotonously, as they pass with a man in prison. Gone was the sense of freedom and the idea of a wider life. Instead of a cell, a house with ten rooms—but Hannah, the jailer, guarding each one. Respectful and attentive, the model servant, he saw in every word a threat against his liberty—his life. In the sullen face and cold eyes he saw her knowledge of power ; in her solicitude for his comfort and approval, a sardonic jest. It was the master playing at being the servant. The years of unwilling servitude were over, but she felt her way carefully with infinite zest in the game. Warped and bitter, with a cleverness which had never before had scope, she had entered into her kingdom. She took it little by little, savouring every morsel.

" I hope I've done right, sir," she said one morning. " I have given Milly notice."

Goddard looked up from his paper. " Isn't she satisfactory ? " he inquired.

" Not to my thinking, sir," said the woman. "And she says she is coming to see you about it. I told her that would be no good."

" I had better see her and hear what she has to say," said her master.

" Of course, if you wish to," said Hannah ; " only, after giving her notice, if she doesn't go I shall. I should be sorry to go—I've been very comfortable here—but it's either her or me."

" I should be sorry to lose you," said Goddard in a hopeless voice.

" Thank you, sir," said Hannah. " I'm sure I've tried to do my best. I've been with you some time now—and I know all your little ways. I expect I understand you better than anybody else would. I do all I can to make you comfortable."

You know best. Some people might think I was worth *two* hundred. That's a bigger jump, but after all a big jump is better than——"

She broke off and tittered. Goddard eyed her.

" ——than a big drop," she concluded.

" Very well, I leave it to you," said Goddard in a voice which strove to be brisk and commanding. " You have my permission to dismiss her."

" There's another thing I wanted to see you about," said Hannah ; " my wages. I was going to ask for a rise, seeing that I'm really housekeeper here now."

" Certainly," said her master, considering, " that only seems fair. Let me see—what are you getting ? "

" Thirty-six."

Goddard reflected for a moment and then turned with a benevolent smile. " Very well," he said, cordially, " I'll make it forty-two. That's ten shillings a month more."

" I was thinking of a hundred," said Hannah, dryly.

The significance of the demand appalled him. " Rather a big jump," he said at last. " I really don't know that I——"

" It doesn't matter," said Hannah. " I thought I was worth it—to you—that's all.

" It doesn't matter," said Hannah. " I thought I was worth it—to you—that's all. You know best. Some people might think I was worth two hundred."

Her master's face set. The lips almost disappeared and something came into the pale eyes that was revolting. Still eyeing her, he rose and approached her. She stood her ground and met him eye to eye.

" You are jocular," he said at last.

" Short life and a merry one," said the woman.

" Mine or yours ? "

" Both, perhaps," was the reply.

" If—if I give you a hundred," said Goddard, moistening his lips, " that ought to make your life merrier, at any rate."

Hannah nodded. " Merry and long, perhaps," she said, slowly. " I'm careful, you know—very careful."

"I am sure you are," said Goddard, his face relaxing.

"Careful what I eat and drink, I mean," said the woman, eyeing him steadily.

"That is wise," he said, slowly. "I am myself—that is why I am paying a good cook a large salary. But don't overdo things, Hannah; don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"I am not likely to do that," she said, coldly. "Live and let live; that is my motto. Some people have different ones. But I'm careful; nobody won't catch me napping. I've left a letter with my sister, in case."

Goddard turned slowly and in a casual fashion put the flowers straight in a bowl on the table, and, wandering to the window, looked out. His face was white again and his hands trembled.

"To be opened after my death," continued Hannah. "I don't believe in doctors—not after what I've seen of them—I don't think they know enough; so if I die I shall be examined. I've given good reasons."

"And suppose," said Goddard, coming from the window, "suppose she is curious, and opens it before you die?"

"We must chance that," said Hannah, shrugging her shoulders; "but I don't think she will. I sealed it up with sealing-wax, with a mark on it."

"She might open it and say nothing about it," persisted her master.

An unwholesome grin spread slowly over Hannah's features. "I should know it soon enough," she declared, boisterously, "and so would other people. Lord! there would be an upset! Chidham would have something to talk about for once. We should be in the paper—both of us."

Goddard forced a smile. "Dear me!" he said, gently. "Your pen seems to be a dangerous weapon, Hannah, but I hope that the need to open it will not happen for another fifty years. You look well and strong."

The woman nodded. "I don't take up my troubles before they come," she said, with a satisfied air; "but there's no harm in trying to prevent them coming. Prevention is better than cure."

"Exactly," said her master; "and, by the way, there's no need for this little financial arrangement to be known by anybody else. I might become unpopular with my neighbours for setting a bad example. Of

course, I am giving you this sum because I really think you are worth it."

"I'm sure you do," said Hannah. 'I'm not sure I ain't worth more, but this'll do to go on with. I shall get a girl for less than we are paying Milly, and that'll be another little bit extra for me."

"Certainly," said Goddard, and smiled again.

"Come to think of it," said Hannah, pausing at the door, "I ain't sure I shall get anybody else; then there'll be more than ever for me. If I do the work I might as well have the money."

Her master nodded, and, left to himself, sat down to think out a position which was as intolerable as it was dangerous. At a great risk he had escaped from the dominion of one woman only to fall, bound and helpless, into the hands of another. However vague and unconvincing the suspicions of Hannah might be, they would be sufficient. Evidence could be unearthed. Cold with fear one moment, and hot with fury the next, he sought in vain for some avenue of escape. It was his brain against that of a cunning, illiterate fool; a fool whose malicious stupidity only added to his danger. And she drank. With largely increased wages she would drink more and his very life might depend upon a hiccuped boast. It was clear that she was enjoying her supremacy; later on her vanity would urge her to display it before others. He might have to obey the crack of her whip before witnesses, and that would cut off all possibility of escape.

He sat with his head in his hands. There must be a way out and he must find it. Soon. He must find it before gossip began; before the changed position of master and servant lent colour to her story when that story became known. Shaking with fury, he thought of her lean, ugly throat and the joy of choking her life out with his fingers. He started suddenly, and took a quick breath. No, not fingers—a rope.

III.

BRIGHT and cheerful outside and with his friends, in the house he was quiet and submissive. Milly had gone, and, if the service was poorer and the rooms neglected, he gave no sign. If a bell remained unanswered he made no complaint, and to studied insolence turned the other cheek of politeness. When at this tribute to her power the woman smiled, he smiled in return. A smile which, for all its disarming softness, left her vaguely uneasy.

"I'm not afraid of you," she said once, with a menacing air.

"I hope not," said Goddard in a slightly surprised voice.

"Some people might be, but I'm not," she declared. "If anything happened to me——"

"Nothing could happen to such a careful woman as you are," he said, smiling again. "You ought to live to ninety—with luck."

It was clear to him that the situation was getting on his nerves. Unremembered but terrible dreams haunted his sleep. Dreams in which some great, inevitable disaster was always pressing upon him, although he could never discover what it was. Each morning he awoke unrefreshed to face another day of torment. He could not meet the woman's eyes for fear of revealing the threat that was in his own.

Delay was dangerous and foolish. He had thought out every move in that contest of wits which was to remove the shadow of the rope from his own neck and place it about that of the woman. There was a little risk, but the stake was a big one. He had but to set the ball rolling and others would keep it on its course. It was time to act.

He came in a little jaded from his afternoon walk, and left his tea untouched. He ate but little dinner, and, sitting hunched up over the fire, told the woman that he had taken a slight chill. Her concern, he felt grimly, might have been greater if she had known the cause.

He was no better next day, and after lunch called in to consult his doctor. He left with a clean bill of health except for a slight digestive derangement, the remedy for which he took away with him in a bottle. For two days he swallowed one tablespoonful three times a day in water, without result, then he took to his bed.

"A day or two in bed won't hurt you," said the doctor. "Show me that tongue of yours again."

"But what is the matter with me, Roberts?" inquired the patient.

The doctor pondered. "Nothing to trouble about—nerves a bit wrong—digestion a little bit impaired. You'll be all right in a day or two."

Goddard nodded. So far, so good; Roberts had not outlived his usefulness. He smiled grimly after the doctor had left at the surprise he was preparing for him. A little rough on Roberts and his professional reputation, perhaps, but these things could not be avoided.

He lay back and visualized the programme. A day or two longer, getting gradually worse, then a little sickness. After that a nervous, somewhat shamefaced patient hinting at things. His food had a queer taste—he felt worse after taking it; he knew it was ridiculous, still—there was

some of his beef-tea he had put aside, perhaps the doctor would like to examine it? and the medicine? Secretions too; perhaps he would like to see those?

Propped on his elbow, he stared fixedly at the wall. There would be a trace—a faint trace—of arsenic in the secretions. There would be more than a trace in the other things. An attempt to poison him would be clearly indicated, and—his wife's symptoms had resembled his own—let Hannah get out of the web he was spinning if she could. As for the letter she had threatened him with, let her produce it; it could only recoil upon herself. Fifty letters could not save her from the doom he was preparing for her. It was her life or his, and he would show no mercy.

FOR three days he doctored himself with sedulous care, watching himself anxiously the while. His nerve was going and he knew it. Before him was the strain of the discovery, the arrest, and the trial. The gruesome business of his wife's death. A long business. He would wait no longer, and he would open the proceedings with dramatic suddenness.

It was between nine and ten o'clock at night when he rang his bell, and it was not until he had rung four times that he heard the heavy steps of Hannah mounting the stairs.

"What d'you want?" she demanded, standing in the doorway.

"I'm very ill," he said, gasping. "Run for the doctor. Quick!"

The woman stared at him in genuine amazement. "What, at this time o' night?" she exclaimed. "Not likely."

"I'm dying!" said Goddard in a broken voice.

"Not you," she said, roughly. "You'll be better in the morning."

"I'm dying," he repeated. "Go—for—the—doctor."

The woman hesitated. The rain beat in heavy squalls against the window, and the doctor's house was a mile distant on the lonely road. She glanced at the figure on the bed.

"I should catch my death o' cold," she grumbled.

She stood sullenly regarding him. He certainly looked very ill, and his death would by no means benefit her. She listened, scowling, to the wind and the rain.

"All right," she said at last, and went noisily from the room.

His face set in a mirthless smile, he heard her bustling about below. The front-door slammed violently and he was alone.

He waited for a few minutes and then, getting out of bed, put on his dressing-gown and set about his preparations. With a steady hand he added a little white powder to the remains of his beef-tea and to the contents of his bottle of medicine. He stood listening a moment at some faint sound from below, and, having satisfied himself, lit a candle and made his way to Hannah's room. For a space he stood irresolute, looking about him. Then he opened one of the drawers and, placing the broken packet of powder under a pile of clothing at the back, made his way back to bed.

He was disturbed to find that he was trembling with excitement and nervousness. He longed for tobacco, but that was impossible. To reassure himself he began to rehearse his conversation with the doctor, and again he thought over every possible complication. The scene with the woman would be terrible; he would have to be too ill to take any part in it. The less he said the better. Others would do all that was necessary.

He lay for a long time listening to the sound of the wind and the rain. Inside, the house seemed unusually quiet, and with an odd sensation he suddenly realized that it was the first time he had been alone in it since his wife's death. He remembered that she would have to be disturbed. The thought was unwelcome. He did not want her to be disturbed. Let the dead sleep.

He sat up in bed and drew his watch from beneath the pillow. Hannah ought to have been back before; in any case she could not be long now. At any moment he might hear her key in the lock. He lay down again and reminded himself that things were shaping well. He had shaped them, and some of the satisfaction of the artist was his.

The silence was oppressive. The house seemed to be listening, waiting. He looked at his watch again and wondered, with a curse, what had happened to the woman. It was clear that the doctor must be out, but that was no reason for her delay. It was close on midnight, and the atmosphere of the house seemed in some strange fashion to be brooding and hostile.

In a lull in the wind he thought he heard footsteps outside, and his face cleared as he sat up listening for the sound of the key in the door below. In another moment the woman would be in the house and the fears engendered by a disordered fancy would have flown. The sound of the steps had ceased, but he could hear no sound of entrance. Until all hope had gone, he sat listening. He was certain he had heard footsteps. Whose?

Trembling and haggard he sat waiting,

His nerve broke, and springing from the bed he sped downstairs and dashed into the night.

assailed by a crowd of murmuring fears. One whispered that he had failed and would have to pay the penalty of failing; that he had gambled with Death and lost.

By a strong effort he fought down these fancies and, closing his eyes, tried to compose himself to rest. It was evident now that the doctor was out and that Hannah was waiting to return with him in his car. He was frightening himself for nothing. At any moment he might hear the sound of their arrival.

He heard something else, and, sitting up suddenly, tried to think what it was and what had caused it. It was a very faint sound—stealthy. Holding his breath, he waited for it to be repeated. He heard it again, the mere ghost of a sound—the whisper of a sound, but significant as most whispers are.

He wiped his brow with his sleeve and told himself firmly that it was nerves, and nothing but nerves; but, against his will, he still listened. He fancied now that the sound came from his wife's room, the other side of the landing. It increased in loudness and became more insistent, but with his eyes fixed on the door of his room he still kept himself in hand, and tried to listen instead to the wind and the rain.

For a time he heard nothing but that. Then there came a scraping, scurrying noise from his wife's room, and a sudden, terrific crash.

With a loud scream his nerve broke, and springing from the bed he sped downstairs and, flinging open the front-door, dashed into the night. The door, caught by the wind, slammed behind him.

With his hand holding the garden gate open, ready for further flight, he stood sobbing for breath. His bare feet were bruised and the rain was very cold, but he took no heed. Then he ran a little way along the road and stood for some time, hoping and listening.

He came back slowly. The wind was bitter and he was soaked to the skin. In desperation he made his way back to the house, only to find the door closed. The porch gave a little protection from the rain, but none from the wind, and, shaking in every limb, he leaned in abject misery against the door. He pulled himself together after a time and stumbled round to the back-door. Locked! And all the lower windows were shuttered. He made his way back to the porch and, crouching there in hopeless misery, waited for the woman to return.

IV.

HE had a dim memory when he awoke of somebody questioning him, and then of being half-pushed, half-carried upstairs to bed. There was something wrong with his head and his chest and he was trembling violently, and very cold. Somebody was speaking.

"You must have taken leave of your senses," said the voice of Hannah. "I thought you were dead."

He forced his eyes to open. "Doctor," he muttered, "doctor."

"Out on a bad case," said Hannah. "I waited till I was tired of waiting, and then came along. Good thing for you I did. He'll be round first thing this morning. He ought to be here now."

She bustled about, tidying up the room, his leaden eyes following her as she collected the beef-tea and other things on a tray and carried them out.

"Nice thing I did yesterday," she remarked, as she came back. "Left the missus's bedroom window open. When I opened the door this morning I found that beautiful Chippidale glass of hers had blown off the table and smashed to pieces. Did you hear it?"

Goddard made no reply. In a confused fashion he was trying to think. Accident or not, the fall of the glass had served its purpose. Were there such things as accidents? Or was Life a puzzle—a puzzle into which every piece was made to fit? Fear and the wind . . . . no: conscience and the wind . . . . had saved the woman. He must get the powder back from her drawer . . . . before she discovered it and denounced him. The medicine . . . . he must remember not to take it . . . .

He was very ill, seriously ill. He must have taken a chill owing to that panic flight into the garden. Why didn't the doctor come? He had come . . . . at last . . . . he was doing something to his chest . . . . it was cold . . . .

Again . . . . the doctor . . . . there was something he wanted to tell him . . . . Hannah and a powder . . . . what was it?

Later on he remembered, together with other things that he had hoped to forget. He lay watching an endless procession of memories, broken at times by a glance at the doctor, the nurse, and Hannah, who were all standing near the bed regarding him. They had been there a long time, and they were all very quiet. The last time he looked at Hannah was the first time for months that he had looked at her without loathing and hatred. Then he knew that he was dying.

LEARNING TO SWIM

by

OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY E. VERPILLEUX

I WENT to sleep in the evening train to Plimbay, sitting in the corner of a warm, well-lit first-class compartment, with my legs on the seat.

I woke in the dark, shivering with cold and lying hard. My head whirred and ached a little. My limbs felt numbed. I tried feebly to grope round me, but I was wrapped up in a rug.

"Train smash," I thought first; but if I was in the wreck, why was nothing pressing on me? And who could have wrapped me up? If I had been carried out of the *débris*, why did I see no flares, hear no sound of rescuers? Why were my clothes wet? It came into my mind suddenly that my fellow-traveller gave me a drink from his flask. I had been drugged.

I felt for my watch and pocket-book, and found them still on me. As robbery wasn't the motive, it could only be to keep me from the trial of John Cannon next week. The solicitors for the Crown said that my evidence would "just do it."

"Kidnapped," I decided. "People who'll do that are pretty dangerous; but apparently they don't want to take a hanging risk. If they meant to murder me they'd have done it off-hand. Their game is to keep me out of the way somewhere. Where am I? And how can I get out?"

I pulled myself together sufficiently to sit up and feel round me. I found nothing but rock underneath. I tried to light a match, but the matches were damp, like my clothes, though the rug over me—it felt like my own—was fairly dry outside. It seemed that I had been in water. There was water inside my boots even. I tasted my scarf. Salt! Sea water, eh?

I explored on my hands and knees; found rock behind me; rock at the right hand; rock at the left. I was in a cave, presumably. I came to a downward slope; to dry seaweed; damp slimy seaweed; wet seaweed; finally to water. I dipped a finger in and tasted that. Salt! Yes, they'd put me in a cave by the sea; brought me to it by sea, apparently. Well, I could do nothing in the dark. If they didn't mean to take the risk of killing me, they'd have to bring me food presently. I'd find out more then. I wondered what time it was; listened to hear if my watch was still going; heard that it was; wound it up; opened the front, felt the hands with my fingers, and judged that the time was about five past four. The light would begin about five o'clock, and the sun should rise a few minutes before six, as it was the latter end of September. Perhaps a little daylight would get into the cave.

I made a cushion of my waterproof, which I found on the ground near me, wrapped myself up in the rug again, and sat trying to think out what I probably had to face.

If they meant to murder me, of course, I'd try to strangle one or two of the murderers; but that didn't need thinking out. I'd assume that they intended to keep me a prisoner until the trial was well over, and Cannon and Co. had hidden themselves abroad. Then they meant to let me go; but further consideration might convince them that murder was the better risk. They knew the sort of man that I was; a dare-

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devil, Mary Neeson had said. Her words came into my mind; possibly because Mary came very readily into it.

The conversation took place at her house one evening. Filmer, my secretary, had asked if I could swim. "No," I said; "not more than half-a-dozen spluttering strokes; but I'd learn between collision and shipwreck!"

"I'd call you a boaster," Mary said, when he had gone; "but if you make an impossible boast, you'll dare the devil to carry it through. That's why I'm half afraid of you. The water isn't so hard to manage as a woman, though!"

"I'm ready to take that on," I told her. "When are you going to make up your mind? You'll have to make it up to 'yes,' you know!"

"I like you," she owned; "but we aren't so young, and we are so pig-headed! I'm *more* than half afraid of you."

"Better have me on your side, then!" I laughed.

"Ye-es; perhaps I had. I'll tell you when I come back from Plimbay."

But in the afternoon, two days after I saw her off, I had a wire.

"Can you come down and see me?—Mary N."

That was how I came to be in the train in the evening of that day.

MARY had nothing to do with the kidnapping, of course. If the wire was genuine, someone who saw it took prompt advantage of the opportunity; but probably it was a fake. Whichever it was, Filmer opened it, as he opened the rest of my correspondence, and handed it to me. He and my manager and my housekeeper alone knew where I was going. The information to my kidnappers must have been obtained directly or indirectly, and anyhow almost immediately, from one of the three. They wouldn't consider that it was a secret. It wasn't. They wouldn't mention it for any evil purpose. Certainly Robinson or Mrs. Brand wouldn't. How about Filmer? Filmer came to me through Polson. Polson married one of the Deedes girls. Another married Lake. Lake was Cannon's nephew——

"It's Filmer," I concluded, setting my mouth. "I'll never rest till I've repaid him! You'll get about seven years, my friend! Well, I've sized it up. I can only wait till someone comes; try bribery; or knock them down, if there aren't more than two"—I am a very powerful man—"and see if I can fight out. I have the advantage of knowing that they don't want to kill me, and I don't mind killing them!" I gritted my teeth. "I don't see what I can do at the moment. I'll have a nap, now I've finished shivering. I'm getting a Turkish bath inside this rug."

I dozed a bit. When I roused I was only in grey darkness instead of black darkness. The grey was a lighter grey in one place. I found that a little light came from a small opening above. The opening was perhaps six or eight inches square, but it seemed to be obstructed by something; by long grass or weeds, I decided, as the light grew more.

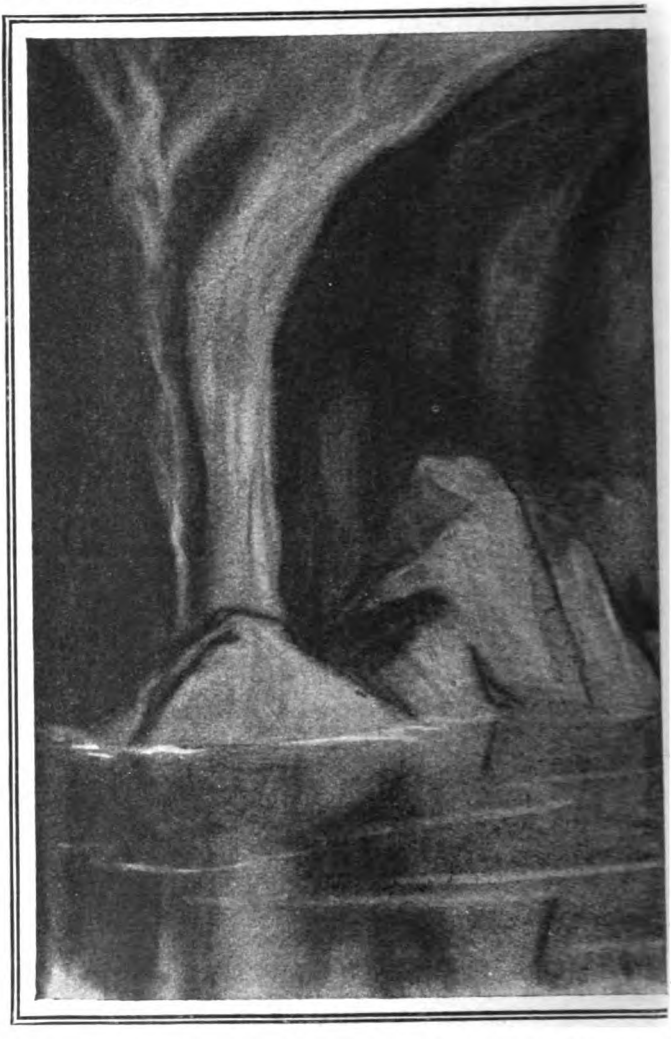
It didn't grow to much; but it enabled me to see my prison in parts. At twenty past six by my watch I made a careful examination of the place.

It was difficult to estimate its size, because there wasn't light enough to show it all at once, only a few feet round me. There was an irregularly uneven space of rocky ground, perhaps sixty feet wide by forty deep. One part, about ten feet square, was fairly smooth and level. It was there that I had found myself lying. The rest was mostly rough and sloping. I couldn't tell how far the cave measured across, as I couldn't see distinctly to the other side of the water. I judged that to be inside the cave by the darkness over it. The height of the cave varied. At some places it wasn't more than twelve feet; at others I couldn't see the top. The aperture through which the light came was about five-and-twenty feet above me. I could see no opening through which I might have been lowered down, and there was not the faintest light anywhere across the water to indicate a sea passage. The water was evidently sea water; tidal water. It had fallen several feet, I judged, from the time when I first touched it.

"Pretty hopeless," I concluded. "I'll have to wait to see which way breakfast comes. If it does. Seven o'clock. Possibly they can't make up their minds whether to keep me here, or come in and murder me, or leave me to starve. They may be arguing it out. Perhaps they've decided to go; or have gone and left me to starve. I might try a shout? No, they may have thought they left me dead. If so, they'd better go on thinking it. I'll lay out the matches to see if they'll dry. With a light I might find a way of escape before I die of hunger. I'm infernally hungry already; infernally thirsty, too!"

I sat down, trying to moisten my mouth with saliva. I kept looking at my watch. Just before half-past seven a shadow fell across the little hole that the light came from. Only a rabbit. But what had made it run? The grass parted. There was a hand pushing it back. Someone was looking through. He'd know I was alive, because I was sitting up. So I might as well speak.

"Look here," I said. "The day has



passed for this game. I shall be missed, and the motive guessed. It's fairly obvious. People's friends and their antecedents will be looked up. There'll be a hue and cry, and you'll be caught and pay for it in the end. You'll make better terms with me than you would with the law."

There was no answer. The light was blocked out for a moment. Then something came through the hole; another moment's darkness, and then another something. Two pint cans with lids were lowered by a string which had a couple of hooks upon it. I unhooked the cans. One held milk. The other held bread and a lump of corned beef.

"What's your idea?" I called up.

There was no answer. A shadow passed from the opening. I began to shout loudly. "Hi! Hi!" The shadow came back. The barrel of a gun was pushed through the opening and pointed at me. I stepped to one side, but the muzzle still covered me. So I stood still.

"Bah!" I cried. "You're afraid of hanging, or you'd have killed me before. You daren't shoot."

The barrel was withdrawn, and a piece of paper tied to a stone was dropped. Then the barrel came in and pointed at me again.

I unfolded the paper and read these words in typewriting :—

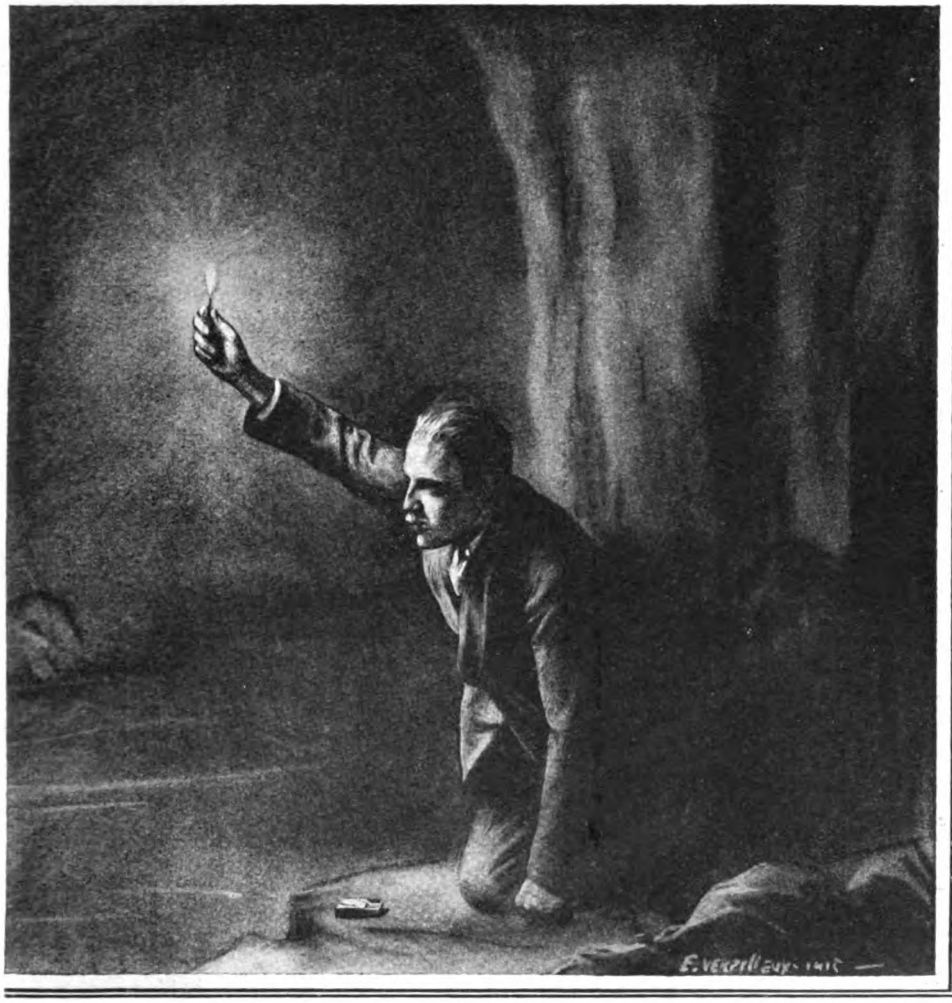
ORDERS

AVOID KILLING UNLESS NECESSARY TO PREVENT ESCAPE OR DISCOVERY, BUT EITHER MUST BE PREVENTED AT ALL COSTS.

Of course, the paper had been given to my warders to be shown to me; but it probably corresponded to their instructions. People who dare to kidnap an influential citizen and take the risk of penal servitude will take the bigger risk, if pushed to it. If I shouted when outsiders happened to be about, the man above probably would shoot, and say that he had been shooting at rabbits. Also anyone would have to be very near to hear. Shouting wasn't much use.

"Very well," I called. "You don't want to risk hanging unless you're driven to it, eh? You prefer the risk of letting me out in due course. I can take a hint. You take one, my friend. You can earn your pay at less risk by letting me out now."

There was no answer. The rifle barrel was withdrawn. I thought I heard steps going away. I sat down and ate my breakfast Then I tried if the match-box and matches were dry enough to light yet; but they weren't. So I sat and thought again. "The way in is the way out. How did they get me in? By an opening above, or by water?"



I managed to strike a match and had a good look round the cave.

A few hours later I managed to strike a match, and lit others by it, in succession. They were damp enough to burn slowly. I had a good look round the cave. I could see no opening in the rock, or by water, but I couldn't see clearly across that; and the opening was probably there; say a winding channel among the rocks. I was doubtless somewhere along the rocky coast of Devon or Cornwall.

"If I could swim over!" I thought; and then I suddenly remembered my boast: that I'd learn to swim between collision and shipwreck. Filmer knew that I couldn't swim; had reckoned on that; and that my boast was mere talk. It was, of course; but Filmer ought to know that I backed my wild boasts; and especially that I'd back one made before Mary Neeson. Did he want incidentally to humiliate me in her eyes? "Why didn't you learn to swim, and get out?" I fancied her saying. I gnashed my teeth, and was taking my coat off to go in, when a horrible suspicion came to me suddenly. I took out the message and walked back to where a ray of light came down from above to read it again. It wasn't written upon one of our office machines, or upon the little "Blick" which Filmer used at home. Who had a machine which wrote like it? A machine which wrote in those print-like characters? The capital N's of which did not take too clearly? The "Home Visible Typer"

which Mary Neeson had bought in one of her freaks, and only learnt to use the capitals of!

DEAR MR. HARDZ,

COME TO TEA WED. AT FOUR ANF SEE ME TZPE!?

YOURS

M. N.

I could see that before me; the two N's dim and blurred! I had told her that the machine would type M. H. better!

I felt hot; perspired, cold as the cave was; wiped my forehead with my handkerchief. Was Mary in the plot against me? Probably she thought it only a plot to humble a boaster, but—— No, she would not run a serious risk to do that; would not have me drugged and imprisoned just for a practical joke. To get Cannon off was the only sufficient motive for kidnapping me. Was it Filmer whom she wanted? She always said that she admired his "wicked resourcefulness." Was she in league with him? Or had he merely managed to use her typewriter?

"I won't condemn her unheard," I told myself—though, in my mind, I had condemned her already—"but these 'orders' were written on her machine. I wonder if I was meant to recognize the typescript? Well, if I was, the writer made a mistake. He's nerved me to swim. Or she has. I'd rather drown than be found here because I couldn't back my boast; bragging fool that I was; showing off to her!"

I undressed and slipped carefully into the pool, where the bottom sloped. It was icy cold and my teeth chattered. I went in till it was almost over my depth, then turned and swam for the shore. I had been shown the stroke when I was a boy, and could swim a yard or two. I did so several times, panting and occasionally swallowing water. Then I remembered that I had been told that I shouldn't waste effort in keeping my mouth high out, but let it go down and breathe when it came up. I tried that, and endeavoured to improve the leg stroke. The last time I swam a bit farther; grew exhausted; swallowed a deal of the sea; scarcely reached the shore.

After that I put on my clothes, wrapped myself in the rug, and shivered for half an hour before I grew warm again. Then I went to sleep till ale and bread and cheese were lowered in two more cans, and the old cans hauled up. The rope waited and was jerked about until I understood that I was to hang them on the hooks. I questioned whoever was above; told him that it was worth a thousand pounds to let me out; but he said nothing; did not even laugh.

In the afternoon I tried swimming again. I made a slight improvement, but I was very tired afterwards. At half-past six, tea in a bottle and bread and butter were let down; also a blanket in a long thin roll. No one came after that. About eight o'clock I got another match to light and smoked two cigarettes. There were half-a-dozen in my case, and they had kept dry. I had another swim. I got on better upon this attempt, or I must have drowned; for I lost direction for a time in the dark. I thought I must have swum twenty yards in the one "go" before I recovered the slope. I was so tired that I went to sleep at once, and did not rouse until the little hole above was faintly light.

WHEN my breakfast came down next morning I tried hard to induce my jailer to tell me how long I was to stay there, offered bribes for a newspaper, etc., etc., but there was no answer. From first to last, not a single word was spoken to me. My jailer or jailers evidently did not mean to be seen or heard.

I found myself stiff from my wild exertions at swimming the day before; but I had my first bathe before breakfast, as I understood that it was inadvisable to go in cold water directly after food. Owing to my stiffness, I seemed to do rather worse than the day before. In the afternoon I went in twice. Upon the second occasion I swam quite a decent distance; to the other side of the cave and back. I found no place to land, however, or even a satisfactory holding place. So I had to return quickly, without exploring.

The next day I went across three times. Twice I found places to hold on to; but I discovered no opening or landing place. The other events of that day were much as before, except that I asked for cigarettes and matches in the morning.

"No use giving me a bigger down on you than you need," I suggested.

Some awful "gaspers" and a box of matches were sent down with my lunch, and rather more food. Also an extra can of water; also a postcard on which there was printed in capitals—very badly formed:—

YOUL BE LET GO IN TIME CANT SAY WEN RECCOLECT YOUD DO THE SAME ALLS FARE IN LOVE AN WAR.

"Love and war," I muttered. "So it's Mary and Filmer. No, I don't believe Mary's in this. He wants to get her from

me. I'll swim all round the bally pool to-day."

I did. I had become quite a fair swimmer now; could float and take a rest, instead of landing, between my swims; felt at home in the water. In the morning I went right round the cave twice, and found two ledges to land upon on the other side, but no outlet. I took over matches and a side of the match-box in my water-tight cigarette-case, and lit up on the ledges to examine the place. No outlet at all that I could see.

In the afternoon I lit more matches to examine the cave for some opening in that. Obviously there must be some means of entrance as I was within. But I couldn't see any.

About six o'clock I went down to the pool to have another swim round. The water was at its lowest then. I was about to go in, when I noticed that, at a spot upon the right, there was a very faintly luminous patch in the water; and suddenly I realized that this was where the tide flowed in and out. I plunged in and swam toward it; held to the rock and pushed myself down; saw more light through a channel about six feet wide, apparently now about level with the sea at the exit. Suddenly the outflow caught me. I was under the water; almost choking. I thought I must choke before I was outside, for the outflow was slow; but at last I came out and up.

I found myself in the water at the foot of rocky cliffs, perhaps fifty feet high, with the open sea before me. I clung to some seaweed which trailed at the side of the entrance, while I recovered my breath and my wits. So this was where they had got me through! It accounted for my wetness.

"Pulled me through here and chanced drowning me," I thought. "Well, now I'm out; and they'll run *their* risk. Ah ha! *Can* I get away? I can't see very well in this bad light; but there seems to be a strip of sand about a couple of hundred yards along. I *might* reach there, floating or hanging on between times. After I've had a rest I'll try it."

During the rest, however, it occurred to me that a naked man who dropped into the first cottage was likely to be regarded with considerable suspicion. The cottage might be that of my jailer, or that of a neighbour of his, who would probably be in the business. Anyhow, he would probably run out and make an outcry; and my enemies were evidently very dangerous people. No, I couldn't seek shelter near by; and if I tried to get far inland, I should probably be seen before I got far. I shouldn't go fast upon my bare feet.

"I ought to go back, and come out in my clothes," I muttered. "Wonder if I can swim in them? Can't swim through against the tide. It's slack water now, if it hasn't turned. Turned, I think. I ought to go back. I can go *in* with the turned tide all right."

I looked at the place where the water eddied, just above the entrance, and shuddered. I don't think I ever found anything so hard as going back to my prison—except staying there till half-past six the next evening. If I went back I knew I must do that. It was necessary to come out with the tide; and it was clearly advisable to do so when it was half-dark, and growing darker. I wanted light enough to let me see the way, and not light enough to make it likely that I should be seen; and darkness to hide me after I got ashore. "Yes," I decided, "I must go back. Here goes!"

I took in my breath and pulled myself into the hole; came up gasping in the pool; found my landing place after some floundering about; stumbled against something while seeking my clothes; found that my warder had been with my supper, and left it on the ground. There was a considerable slack in the string. It occurred to me that I wanted a piece of this. I heard steps coming (I could always hear them farther off at night). So I fumbled in my waistcoat pocket for my penknife—it was dark, of course—cut out a portion, and rejoined the ends just as the man jerked at the string from the top.

"Here!" I cried. "Let me take them off. I must have been asleep. How much longer is this going on?"

There was no answer. I took off the cans, and tightened the knots I had made.

"All right," I said. "Pull up. Can't see down here. You might give me a candle."

IT suddenly occurred to me that he might have brought one to light and let down and see what had become of me, as I had not answered; and if he did that he'd see me naked and dripping and guess that I could swim. I gathered my clothes and myself hastily together under the rug.

However, no light appeared; but he let down a candle stuck upon one of the hooks. No doubt he had fetched it to let down alight and take a look round, if I hadn't spoken upon his second visit.

"Thanks," I said. "I can eat and drink by the feel. I'll save the light for to-morrow."

He went, and I dressed in the dark; lit the candle then and had my supper and a smoke by the light. It seemed quite

luxurious. What little things are luxuries, if they are hard to get!

The next morning, in addition to my breakfast, I received two more candles, a clay pipe, some tobacco, and a magazine; also an ill-printed note:—

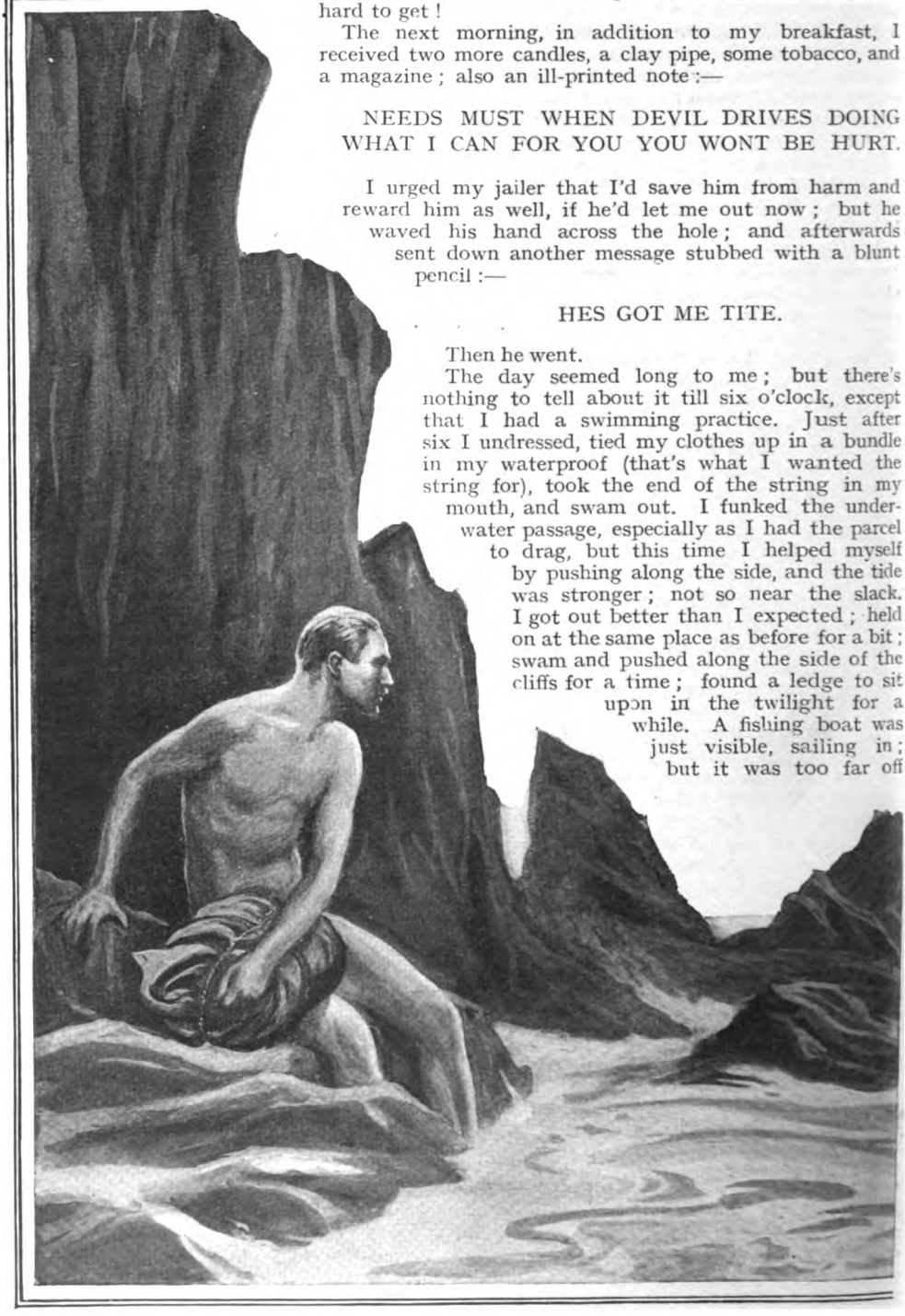
NEEDS MUST WHEN DEVIL DRIVES DOING WHAT I CAN FOR YOU YOU WONT BE HURT.

I urged my jailer that I'd save him from harm and reward him as well, if he'd let me out now; but he waved his hand across the hole; and afterwards sent down another message stubbed with a blunt pencil:—

HES GOT ME TITE.

Then he went.

The day seemed long to me; but there's nothing to tell about it till six o'clock, except that I had a swimming practice. Just after six I undressed, tied my clothes up in a bundle in my waterproof (that's what I wanted the string for), took the end of the string in my mouth, and swam out. I funked the under-water passage, especially as I had the parcel to drag, but this time I helped myself by pushing along the side, and the tide was stronger; not so near the slack. I got out better than I expected; held on at the same place as before for a bit; swam and pushed along the side of the cliffs for a time; found a ledge to sit upon in the twilight for a while. A fishing boat was just visible, sailing in; but it was too far off



I found a ledge to sit upon for a while. A fishing boat was

for anyone to see me. I considered hailing it, but thought it better that no one should know of my escape. Besides, the fishermen might be friends of my captors for all I knew. It was almost dark when I went on, and colder than I liked. I reached the sandy spit at last; and there was no one about.

I dressed there and walked on, carrying the waterproof under my arm (dry side out!), smoking cigarettes and whistling or humming in between to seem as unconcerned as possible. I left the cliff that my prison was under on my left. Presently I saw a light on the top. It disappeared quickly. I guessed that my "warder" was letting it down through the opening to see what had happened that I did not speak or take my rations. I ran then, except when I saw people about. I hid behind a hedge while some passed.

Out in the main road, I recognized where I was; the village of Polywell, about eight miles from Plimbay. I made for Hartling Junction; got a train from there at nine-twenty-five, reached London at about three the next morning, and my house at half-past. I slept in the train. In the taxi I mostly laughed. "The fools to leave me my money," I thought. "If they hadn't, I'd have had to foot it to town—learnt to walk as well as to swim!—or to go to the police; and then I'd have been unable to settle things in my own way."

That was to find out about Mary and Filmer, before they knew that I had escaped. But they probably knew by now, by telegram, if they were in it—unless the man whom the devil held "tite" was afraid to own his failure, and waited for the morning to go into the cave before reporting it. (As a matter of fact, I discovered afterwards, this was what happened.)

I let myself in with my key and roused the housekeeper.

"Don't tell anyone else I'm back," I said. "Dress and come down and cook me a chop or something. I'll have tomato sauce, like Mr. Pickwick."

The good old soul almost fell on my neck. She thought I'd met with my death, she said, and she looked upon me "most as a son"; and "Miss Neeson took on almost as if she were your wife, the last time she came," she told me, sitting and watching me eat as if *she* were enjoying the good food. "Ah! You've been a long time finding the right lady, sir; but you've found her at last. And the right secretary, or whatever you call him. Mr. Filmer's been hunting through your papers for a clue, as if he was nearly mad. He and she have got a detective of their own on the job, as well as the people the police have put on. She says she doesn't know what she'd have done without Mr. Filmer."

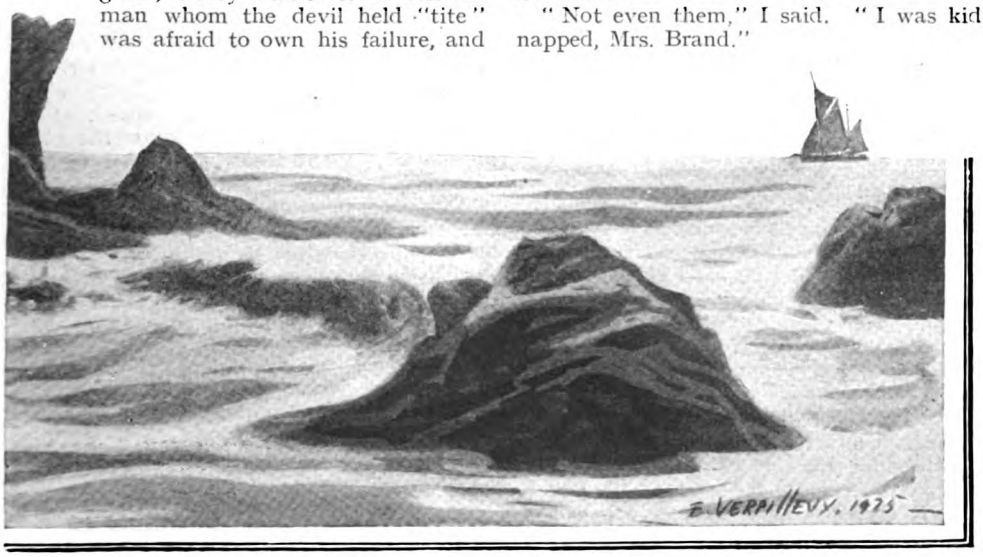
"Ah!" I said. "They are acting together, eh? *I* see. Who is their detective?"

"Mr. Merrydew, sir."

"Merrydew, eh? He's a good man. I know him well. I think I'll go to bed now. You mustn't mention my return to a soul."

"You'll 'phone and tell *them* you're back, sir?" she urged. "They're worrying their lives out."

"Not even them," I said. "I was kidnapped, Mrs. Brand."



just visible, but it was too far off for anyone to see me.

She screamed.

"That anybody should have the daring to lay hands on *you!*" she cried.

"Well, they did. Imprisoned me in a cave. I escaped. I am not sure if they know it. If they don't, I am likelier to find out who they were, you see. So we'll keep quiet for the moment."

"Yes, sir; but Miss Neeson—bless her!—and Mr. Filmer—bless him too!—wouldn't mention it, any more than I would."

"Perhaps," I said, "I prefer to announce my escape to them in person."

She laughed then: laughed and cried and wiped her eyes.

"I see," she said, "I see, sir. You'll find her ready enough to fall into your arms!"

"Ah!" I said. "Now I'll go to bed."

I went to bed; but in my bedroom I 'phoned to Merrydew in his bedroom. We had a long talk. I arranged to go to his office at half-past eight the next morning. He was having Mary and Filmer there at nine. We had a long talk before Mary arrived at five to nine, with her father. Merrydew put me behind the big screen where he kept his washstand. I could see them through the joint of the screen. She was very pale and restless. Her father was even more restless; kept pacing the room. I was afraid that he might look behind the screen. However, Filmer came at the hour; and Merrydew got them all round the table then.

"Well, Mr. Merrydew?" Filmer asked. "Anything to tell us?"

"Nothing," Merrydew said, "just yet. Let me review the case, as speaking to three intimate friends of Mr. Hardy. When a man disappears it is generally for one of three reasons: a woman; money; or foul play."

Mary leaned forward quickly.

"It isn't for the first reason," she said. "I am certain that I am the only woman who matters to Mr. Hardy. I suppose it is a fairly open secret to you that he is the only man who matters to me."

She gave a dry little sob; and I had to hold to the washstand for a moment. I felt as if I had received a blow—a blow of shame that I had suspected Mary of cruel treachery. She had said nothing to alter what I knew. Merrydew had told me that she professed great regard for me, and she would do so, of course, if she were guilty; but somehow, in that instant, I knew that she was not.

"It isn't money," Filmer said. "There's no straighter man breathing—if the dear old chap is"—he gulped—"than the governor. It certainly isn't money. His affairs are quite all right, I assure you."

"Then," Merrydew said, "it comes down to foul play. There is one evident motive for wanting him out of the way: to keep him from appearing at the Cannon trial this morning. Eh, Mr. Neeson?"

"Yes, yes," the old man said, drumming on the table with his hands. "We've been over that before; over it before. As I tell Mary, we ought rather to hope for it. They wouldn't bear any enmity against him. No, no! They'd only want to keep him out of the way for a time, not kill him."

"He isn't an easy man to keep from what he means to do, alive," Mary cried.

"That's what you forget, Mr. Neeson," Filmer said.

"Anyhow," Merrydew said, "he was entrapped by a telegram purporting to be sent by Miss Neeson."

"And," Filmer observed, "not traced at the office of its professed origin—Plimbay."

"No doubt not sent from there," Mr. Neeson said; "not sent from there."

"I think," Merrydew said, "I can now prove that it was." (This and what followed was just bluff, which Merrydew and I had agreed to try.) "And I think I shall be able to prove who sent it, and induced the clerk to destroy the original. And to prove his past connection with Cannon. *That* I can certainly prove."

"Tut, tut!" Mr. Neeson said, fidgeting upon the table with his lean white hands. "That's nothing. Lots of us knew Cannon in years past. *I* did."

"Further," Merrydew said, "I shall be able to prove where Mr. Hardy was, though I can't say where he is now."

"Mr. Merrydew!" Mary cried. "You've heard of him?" She clutched the detective's arm. "I'm very anxious," she gasped. "Be quick."

"Mr. Hardy," he said, "was drugged in the train; carried off and put in a cave at Polywell."

"What!" old Neeson screamed.

"Polywell, I said. You know the place, perhaps? Went there when you were at Plimbay with your daughter? He was imprisoned in a cave under the sea cliff. There was an exit through an under-water channel. Possibly Mr. Hardy found this, and tried to get through. Anyhow, he disappeared from the cave yesterday evening. I always understood that he couldn't swim. So——"

Neeson fell suddenly upon his hands upon the table.

Mary shrieked wildly.

"Find who sent that telegram," she cried, "and hang him! He has murdered him."

"Murdered him!" Filmer said fiercely; "and there's the man!"

He pointed to Neeson, who shivered but said nothing.

"How dare you say that?" Mary cried. "Speak to him, father. Speak!"

"There's the man!" Filmer said, fiercely.

The old man sat up. He shivered and twitched.

"No, no," he said. "It is absurd; preposterous. I had nothing to do with it. The suggestion is an insult—an insult!"

"Someone," Merrydew said, "sent him a warning that he would be killed if he tried to escape. That warning was typed on your daughter's typewriter, Mr. Neeson. There is a defective letter which identifies it. If you don't confess, you are accusing your daughter!"

"I was in Cannon's power," Neeson groaned. "I stipulated that he shouldn't be harmed. I didn't mean to kill him——"

Mary shrieked again; swayed in her chair. I stepped out from behind the screen, and held her.

"He hasn't," I said; "only taught me to swim; and to know some people better—and myself. I have something nearly as bad to confess. I doubted you, Mary; and you, Filmer. You forgive me for that, and I'll forgive Mr. Neeson for—for putting me in the way of learning to swim!"

"You would!" Mary said, stroking my arm.

"He'll learn to be a good husband just as quickly," said Filmer.

"You may forgive me," Neeson groaned, "but Cannon won't. He'll drag me in."

"He will not," I declared.

He didn't. I made it clear to his solicitors that, if he did, he'd have to face the charge of conspiring to kidnap an important witness, and get a doubled sentence. As it was, he got off with five years; and I got off with Mary! A swimming prize, she says. A prize anyhow! I've sworn that she shall find me one; "and, if it's one of my boasts, my dear," I said, "you know that I back them!"

"Adapted from the Novel...."

WHAT

RAFAEL SABATINI, IAN HAY, 'SAPPER', GILBERT FRANKAU, H de VERE STACPOOLE, E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM AND W. W. JACOBS

THINK OF THE FILM VERSIONS OF THEIR NOVELS

Interviews by Fenn Sherie

For good or for evil, the cinema is rapidly establishing itself as a new medium for story-telling. A certain section of the public is getting into the habit of obtaining most of its fiction from films, and is forming its impressions of our leading novelists from moving-picture versions—and perversions—of their works.

As to whether these film stories do justice to the original novels from which they are more or less freely "adapted" even the authors themselves have widely divergent views.

The following interesting opinions have been gleaned in the course of personal interviews with some of our most popular novelists.

RAFAEL SABATINI.

MR. RAFAEL SABATINI, whose vivid historical novels lend themselves admirably to filming, explained that, although he regards the cinema as an excellent form of entertainment, he does not consider it a wholly satisfactory medium for story-telling. For this reason he cannot be persuaded to write direct for the films.

"In endeavouring to tell his story through the medium of the moving picture," he said, "the author or producer is hampered by mechanical limitations, and his work is influenced, to some extent, by the personal characteristics of his actors and his technical staff. On the other hand, in writing a novel, the story-teller is limited only by his own ability to express himself.

"Further, it seems to me that there can be very little personal satisfaction in creating a story solely for cinema purposes. After all, much of the pleasure of authorship is obtained from the knowledge that the results of one's labours—however imperfect they may be—exist as something tangible that will endure at least for a while. But the pleasures of film production must surely be as evanescent as the moving pictures themselves.

"The novelist, like the sculptor, endeavours to achieve 'the perpetuation of a moment.' A fleeting 'moment' captured and set down in writing endures; but photographed on to cinema film, it remains but a moment. That is to say, all the thoughts, ideas, and emotions that the novelist endeavours to perpetuate may be recaptured by the reader at will; whereas those of the film-maker reappear only as

fleeting shadows. The novel-reader can take his pleasures when and where he wishes, whilst the cinema-goer is dependant upon opportunity.

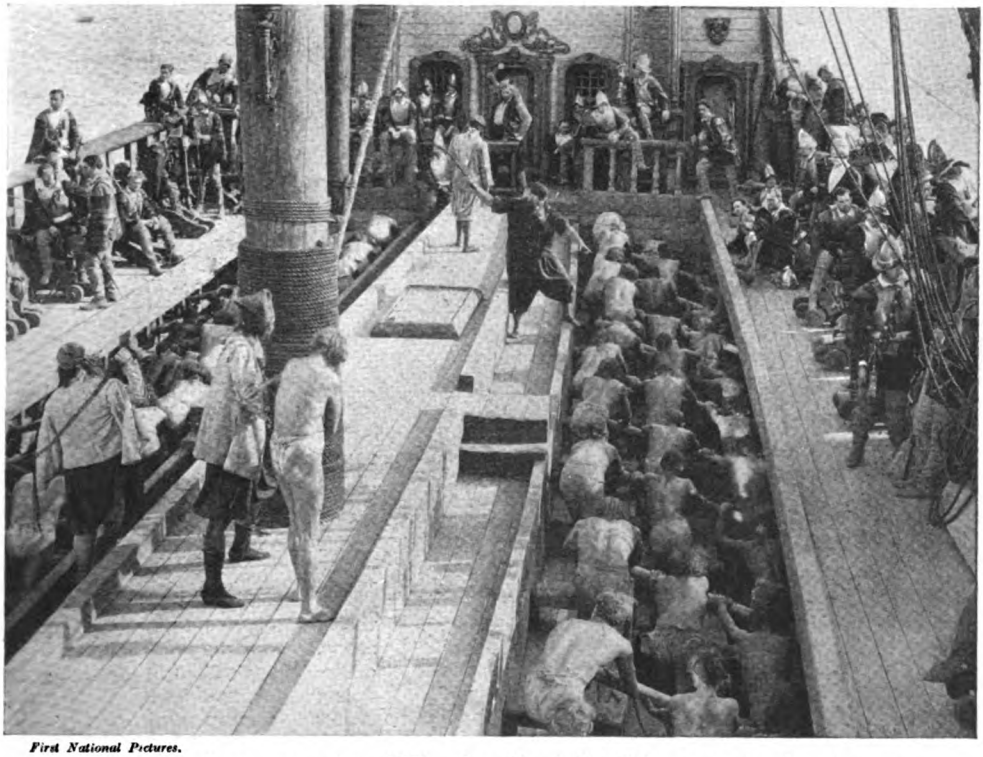
"Regarding the cinema as supplementary to the novel, however, it is undoubtedly an excellent medium for the re-expression of an author's ideas. Provided a novel is sufficiently well-constructed to allow of its being filmed without considerable alteration and re-arrangement—that is, provided that the skeleton plot, when stripped of its covering of words, still shows no flaws or joints—the cinema version, if produced and acted by experts, cannot fail to enhance the value and interest of the story."

"Then, generally speaking, you have been favourably impressed with the various films made from your novels?" I suggested.

'Yes. Although they have necessarily been lacking in the literary touches which are dear to the heart of one whose craft is writing, most of them have been remarkably good. When I saw the first film version that was made from one of my novels—'The Tavern Knight'—my feelings were almost akin to those of a young author who sees himself in print for the first time. Apart from the sheer novelty of seeing my work reproduced in a new form, I was particularly surprised, and perhaps a little flattered, to find how well the producer and the actors had understood and interpreted the ideas I had striven to convey in writing. In particular, Mr. Eille Norwood's characterization of the title-*rôle* was as near to the original of my imagination as it was possible to be.

"Naturally, now that the first flush of enthusiasm has left me, I have become more critical, and I am perhaps inclined to take it for granted that the characters will be portrayed 'as written.' Sometimes I am disappointed. In the case of 'Scaramouche,' for instance, although I appreciate the artistry and skill both of the producer and the actor concerned, I feel that Ramon Novarro was not quite happy in tne leading *rôle*. Whether due to some unsuitability of his own temperament or to the method of attack adopted, it seemed to me that he played too straight and seriously, thereby failing to suggest the irresponsible rascal who was 'born with a gift for laughter and a sense that the world was mad.'

"Naturally, the mental pictures an author



First National Pictures.

The galley-slaves scene from "The Sea Hawk," which agrees in almost every detail with Mr. Rafael Sabatini's original conception.

creates in his own mind when writing his story are so definite and so vivid that it is only by sheer coincidence that the reconstruction of them in a film agrees with the original conception. Yet there are two instances in my mind in which the scenes agree in almost every detail with my first mind-picture, even to the settings and the grouping of the characters. The picture of the galley-slaves in 'The Sea Hawk,' and the scene from 'Captain Blood' in which Blood and his crew are watching the sinking of their old ship, the *Arabella*, were both so near to my original conception that I experienced quite a shock when I saw them on the screen. I felt as though something I had previously seen in a dream had suddenly become a reality.

"The art of the novelist is so different from that of the film-maker that I do not think there can be any real rivalry between them. To those who would draw their pleasures from both sources I would offer one hint—if possible see the film before you read the novel. Every reader draws his own mind-pictures, with which the film will probably disagree. If, however, he has seen the film, his mind-pictures are already formed, and he has more leisure for studying the written word."

GILBERT FRANKAU.

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU believes that the cinema is the universal story-telling medium of the future. But he predicts that there will be many changes in its technique before it attains this position.

"Most of the film producers of to-day—especially those in America—make one big mistake," he said. "They regard the moving picture as an entirely new and self-contained form of entertainment, whereas actually it is only a new medium for the oldest of all forms of entertainment—story-telling.

"So long as human nature remains unchanged, the ancient art of the story-teller—the building of a plot, the portrayal of scenes, characters, and emotions—will prevail. The cinema will not alter the fundamentals of fiction any more than did Caxton's invention of printing.

"In order to make a film of a popular novel it may sometimes be necessary to re-shape the story, but to alter it altogether is utterly foolish. Some of the sex-film merchants are obsessed with the idea that they have to appeal to a fictitious body of dope-seekers whom they call the 'cinema public,' but they lose sight of the fact that their audiences are made up of the very same people whom the publisher calls the 'novel-reading public,' the theatrical magnate calls the 'theatre public,' and the railway manager calls the 'travelling public.' If the public—that is, the General Public—approves of a story in book form, surely it wants the film version to be as near as possible to the original.

"When I sold the cinema rights of 'Gerald Cranston's Lady' I did so on the understanding that the producers should have a free hand to 'adapt' the story as they liked. You will understand, therefore, that any criticism I make is expressed not in anger, but in sorrow for the many opportunities the film-makers have missed.

"Apart from the fact that some of the characters have been Americanized, that a dignified English Peer is made to look like a rascally old reprobate, and that one or two utterly irrelevant scenes are dragged in for 'box-office appeal' (there is one episode introducing a dusky African 'vamp' who seems to have been 'lifted' straight out of the successful stage-play, 'White Cargo'!)—apart from these minor discrepancies the casting is good, and the acting of Alma Rubens as Hermione agrees entirely with my conception of the character.

"But the producer has completely overlooked the climax of the story!

"Briefly, the situation is this: Gerald Cranston, ex-gunner and mine-owner, defends his mine against a mob of fanatical strikers. He raises his revolver to fire upon them—and then suddenly he realizes that these are the very men who served under him in France during the war—the gallant men of whom he was once so proud. His arm drops to his side. His revolver clatters to the ground

"Now I should imagine that a film producer, well versed in the technique of his art, having at his command a medium through which thoughts can be expressed pictorially, could have made an intensely dramatic scene from this episode. Yet for some reason it was overlooked altogether.

"It seems to me that the satisfactory

translation of a novel into a moving picture can only be accomplished by close co-operation between the author and the producer. In the case of the film I have just mentioned, which was made in America, this was obviously out of the question. I am hoping, however, that it will be found possible to make all the future moving-picture versions of my novels in this country—that is, as soon as British film production is restored to a firm financial footing.

"Already one successful experiment in co-operation has been made. I refer to the film of 'The Love Story of Aliette Brunton.' The producer of this picture, Mr. Maurice Elvey, allowed me to edit the scenario, consulted me with regard to the casting, invited me to stand at his elbow during the 'shooting' of many of the scenes, and finally asked me to write all the sub-titles and edit the finished film. The result is a happy blending of the arts of the actor, the producer, and the story-teller.

Aliette Brunton, ill-treated by her husband, decides to telephone to her lover—a dramatic moment in "The Love Story of Aliette Brunton."

Stoll Picture Productions.

"I look forward to the time when these somewhat exceptional methods of film-making will become the rule—when authors and producers will work side by side, the one telling the story and the other interpreting it in picture form; the one making the film and the other writing the sub-titles; the whole process culminating in the simultaneous 'release' of the novel and the film.

"The future of the film must be founded upon co-operation. I hold this belief so strongly that I have already refused nearly fifty offers for the film rights of 'Peter Jackson, Cigar Merchant.' An essentially British picture can only be successfully filmed by a British company. The sooner the authors, exhibitors, and the public of this country realize this fact and support our home film industry, the sooner shall we attain the ideal picturization of our national novels."

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

MR. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE maintains that an author should not interfere with the production of the moving-picture versions of his novels.

"Film production and novel-writing are two distinct and separate arts," he said, "and I should no more think of telling a producer how to make a film from one of my novels than I should of telling an artist how to paint my portrait.

"When a producer asks for my advice, however, there is just one point upon which I like to express an opinion, and that is with reference to the scenic backgrounds. I feel very strongly that all the exterior scenes of a film-play should, if possible, be taken in the actual settings described in the story. To my mind the outstanding advantage which the cinema has over all the other story-telling mediums is that it can convey something of the romance and the glamour and the wildness of Nature's own scenery to people who are unable to travel and see

the world for themselves. To my mind, the ideal film-play is that which combines all the finest qualities of the human drama with the scenic beauties of a travel film, and I am pleased to see that there is a marked tendency in this direction.

"For the filming of 'The Blue Lagoon' a special schooner was chartered, and the company spent six months on a Pacific island. One day Nature took a hand in imparting an extra touch of realism. It was in the course of a scene in which the hero and heroine, surprised by savages, hid behind a tree. The expression of terror on their faces was most realistic, and—as the actors explained later — not altogether assumed, for whilst the episode was actually being taken they had made the appalling discovery that they were in the midst of a nest of snakes!

"Up to the present the film which has come nearest to my ideal, as regards scenic qualities, is 'Satan's Sister,' adapted from the novel 'Satan.' Mr. George Pearson, the producer, after talking the matter over with me, took his entire company to Jamaica to film the exterior scenes, and, aided by a genuinely artistic camera-man, succeeded in portraying the story amidst some of the most beautiful settings I have ever seen in a film. True, he altered the story very considerably in order to feature Miss Betty Balfour in the leading *rôle*, but I have nothing to say against that. The 'adaptation' is entirely justified by her very charming performance."

"To return to the subject of films in general," I interrupted. "Does the idea of writing stories specially for film purposes appeal to you?"

"I am afraid not," was the reply. "The reason is very simple. If I think of a plot that is good enough for a film, I shall want to use it for a novel. If the cinema people want to make a film from it afterwards, of course they are welcome to do so.

"As to whether the cinema constitutes a serious rival to the novel as a form of popular amusement, I cannot say. The showing of a film undoubtedly arouses a certain amount of interest in the novel. Apropos of this, a book-seller in Cambridge told me that after 'The Blue Lagoon' had been showing there, a dear old lady walked into his shop and asked for 'a copy of the book that was written from the film called "The Purple Lake," or something like that.'

"On the other hand, the reading of the novel also arouses a desire to see the film. In either case, I do not think it makes the slightest difference whether a person obtains his first introduction to a story by reading it or by seeing it on the screen. Reading is a very different pastime from cinema-going, and although a person may enjoy both, I do not think the one affects the other in any way. Although a person may see the film before he reads the novel, it does not follow that the mental visions he conjures up later when he reads the story will be similar to the pictures he has seen on the screen. Indeed, I think that to the intelligent reader, part of the pleasures of novel reading is derived from the making of his own mind-pictures. For instance,

A scene from Mr. Stacpoole's "Satan's Sister," which was filmed on a real tropical island.
Balfour—Welsh—Pearson Films.

it is said that every woman likes to picture herself as the heroine of the story she is reading. One can hardly imagine, therefore, that every woman who sits down to read, let us say, 'Satan,' after seeing the film would open the book with the preconceived idea that the character will be exactly as it was portrayed by Miss Betty Balfour on the screen.

"Indeed, intelligent comparison of the film and the novel provides a new form of mental stimulus which I feel sure is a real source of pleasure to quite a large section of the reading public."

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

MR. E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM considers that the moving picture is a very inadequate and unsatisfactory substitute for the novel, and he strongly deplores its great popularity amongst the class of people who, he says, are "too lazy to read."

"The position the cinema has gained with the public," he said, "indicates a lamentable preference for the mechanical and Robot-like presentation of a story without its graces of description, character-drawing, or atmosphere. The titles thrown upon the screen are only a miserable subterfuge.

"The idea of writing specially for the films does not greatly appeal to me, as when I have a story to write I prefer my own method of expression. It would, however, give me a certain amount of interest and satisfaction to take one of my own stories and, while I was writing it as a novel, write it also for the screen—provided that I was allowed to do it entirely my own way, regardless of what the producer said might and might not be shown, and to write my own titles when I felt that any were needed. I have never heard of an author being allowed to do this, however, and I think the scenario writer's influence is too strong to make it likely that he will ever be allowed to do so.

"I consider all the film presentations of my novels which I have seen hopelessly bad, with the exception of 'The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss,' done by Hepworth's, and 'The Great Impersonation,' by the Famous Players. I have very much enjoyed writing the story for the film entitled 'Monte Carlo' (which has not yet been shown), chiefly owing to the fact that, for almost the first time, I was associated with a thoroughly sympathetic and artistic producer, Mr. Louis

This scene from Mr. Oppenheim's film "Monte Carlo" is the first ever taken in the Casino itself.

The Gaumont Co., Ltd.

Mercanton. In this case, however, the story required was a slight one and of less importance than an intimacy with the day by day life and environment of the Principality.

"Speaking generally as regards the filming of novels, I think in the vast majority of cases the screen representations are exceedingly disappointing. I am not an authority on the subject, but am inclined to blame the producer for his stubborn and almost universal refusal to collaborate with the author, and bringing his individual methods of mind and mechanical treatment to every manuscript committed to his charge regardless of its varying qualities. The producer is, no doubt, a very intelligent person, and probably an artist at his work, but it would be very much better for him to create the story for himself and make his own screen representation than to consider it his duty to mutilate the story itself, motive, and character of other people's work committed to his charge. As regards co-operation between author and producer, the subject is one which, in my first enthusiasm for the films, I urged with all the eloquence at my command on every possible occasion; but I have long since come to the conclusion that it cannot and never will exist, generally speaking, simply because the combination of producer and scenario writer won't have it. For some reason or other, never entirely clear to me, the latter seem to possess the complete confidence of their employers, whilst the author is looked upon as more or less of a fool.

"I don't pretend that my experience has been a very wide one, and it is just possible that I may have been exceptionally unfortunate."

W. W. JACOBS.

MR. W. W. JACOBS, himself a regular cinema-goer, prefaced his remarks on film-novels with some interesting observations upon the psychology of picture audiences.

"Although the patrons of some of the better-class cinemas may appreciate art in film production," he said, "the majority of 'movie fans'—I use the Americanism intentionally—still prefer stereotyped stories and situations.

"When young Alf and his sweetheart Gladys go to the pictures they know exactly what they want, and the exhibitors take good care that they get it. To them the term 'comedy' implies broad knock-about humour, with plenty of tar, water, revolving fences, and other mechanical mishaps. And, generally speaking, their idea of a 'drama' is a play in which the heroine is held in the villain's clutches whilst a band of gallant horsemen dash to her rescue. The longer the rescuers take to reach the scene, the better Alf and Gladys like it. They must know, from previous experience of similar films, that the horsemen are bound to arrive in time to save the girl, but that does not mar their enjoyment in the least. They prefer to disregard this fact and allow their reasoning faculties to be numbed by the thrill of suspense which the picture provides right up to the final moment of the rescue, when the release from tension is expressed by vigorous applause and even cheering.

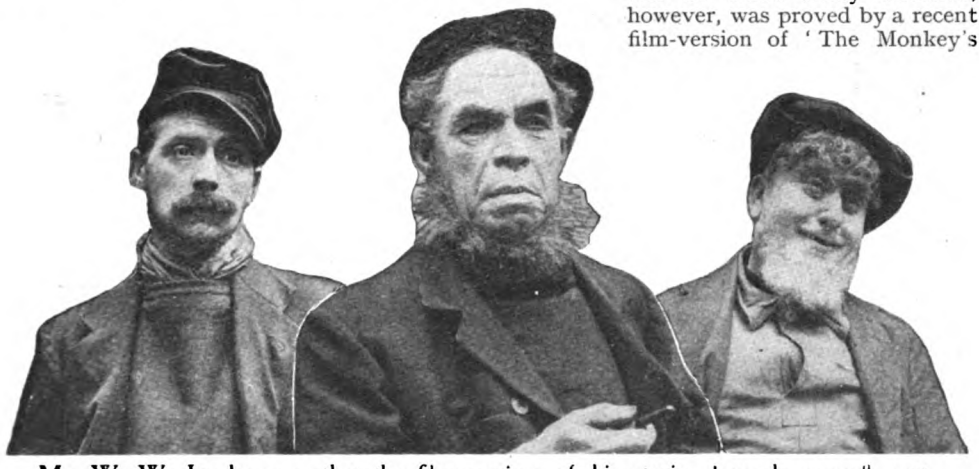
"I read somewhere the other day that a certain American producer has a card index in which he files for future use notes of all the situations which have been found to appeal to cinema audiences. Whether this is true or not, the fact remains that many of these American films are of the machine-made variety.

"These facts have an important effect upon the filming of novels, because when a British producer sets out to make a film from a novel he often finds it expedient to adapt the story not only to his medium but also to popular taste. The author who disposes of the cinema rights of a novel must therefore be prepared to see it extensively altered for picture purposes—especially if it is a humorous one.

"Consequently, in some of the relationships between authors and the film versions of their works it may be said that it is a wise parent that knows its own child.

"I am pleased to say that most of the moving picture versions of my stories have been made in this country—the producer being Mr. Manning Hayes, for whose skill I have the greatest admiration. He is one of the few picture-makers who, whilst never forgetting popular tastes, endeavours to study the author's point of view and interpret his ideas in picture form. In most cases he has been good enough to submit the scenarios to me for my suggestions, which I, in turn, have made on the understanding that he would carry them out only if he considered them practicable. This policy of 'give and take' has, I am glad to say, resulted in a number of very successful pictures.

"The casting, too, has always been good, and, in particular, I have a great admiration for the character studies of Mr. John Butt, who portrays my old sailor-men to the life.



Mr. W. W. Jacobs says that the film versions of his stories have been well cast. This trio of typical Jacobs characters from "The Skipper's Wooing" bears him out.
Artistic Films, Ltd.

"I have spent a good many hours in the studios and elsewhere watching the making of moving pictures, and I have been greatly impressed with the facile manner in which film actors are able to portray any given emotion 'to order.' I admire, also, the ingenious manner in which producers arrange their stories so as to grip the attention of the audience from the commencement. This is not at all an easy thing to do in a film—especially in a dramatic one—because in many plots so much has to be introduced to lead up to the main story. In a novel this introduction is often accomplished by dialogue (in some old plays by a soliloquy), but in a film the preamble must be pictorial, and this, unless very skilfully handled, may become tedious. That such an introduction can be made really effective, however, was proved by a recent film-version of 'The Monkey's Paw,' in which the sense of impending tragedy seemed to pervade the picture almost from the very beginning.

"I think that the sub-titles play an important part in the unfolding of a film story. So long as they are carefully written and judiciously introduced they do not seem to me to interrupt the development of the plot in the least, and in some cases I fancy they assist it. They are particularly valuable in humorous stories, for I have often known a good sub-title to raise as hearty a laugh as any piece of action in the picture itself."

IAN HAY.

"IAN HAY" (Major J. H. Beith), who has studied film production both at Hollywood and in this country, and is keenly interested in the development of the moving picture as a story-telling medium, approached the question of filmed fiction from an entirely impersonal view-point.

"The truth is," he said, "that there are comparatively few novels suitable for filming. Even the best of producers cannot make pictures from the chapters of dialogue, the pages of descriptive matter, and the paragraphs of character analysis of which the average modern work of fiction is composed. To make a good play a story must have a strong plot, plenty of action, and some good situations. If it is deficient in these qualities the author must not be surprised if the producer 'adapts' it to suit his medium.

"It must be remembered, too, that the cinema and the novel appeal to almost entirely different sections of the public. Cinema-goers, as a general rule, are those people who like to take their amusement without personal effort. Some are illiterate, others are simply lazy, but all of them go to the cinema because or when they find it too much trouble to read. I do not blame them. Indeed, I

am one of them—and I find that the cinema is an extremely restful form of entertainment.

"Regarding the films made from novels, I do not think it wise to attempt to draw comparisons, for the two mediums are so utterly different. It is, however, possible to compare a film with a stage play, so perhaps I can better explain my point of view as a dramatist.

"As a medium for dramatic interpretation the cinema has certain marked advantages over the stage. One of the most important of these, to my mind, is that it puts the entire audience, as it were, on the same 'plane,' enabling the people in the cheapest seats to appreciate the play every bit as well as those in the most expensive ones. In the theatre a great deal of facial expression is wasted upon two-thirds of the audience because they are too far from the actors, and emotion has to be conveyed by artificial gestures and inflections of the voice. With a 'close-up' on the screen, however, even the slightest flicker of an eyelid can be seen in every part of the house. Again, in a film the plot is unfolded more simply and more directly. Imagine, for example, a scene in which a girl returns home to her family after a secret marriage. On the stage, in order to let the audience into the secret that the girl is married, the author has to find excuses for sending all the other characters off the stage while she confides it to an intimate friend—usually over the telephone.

"But on the screen he need resort to no such artificialities. He shows the audience a 'close-up' of the girl's left hand, which she is hiding behind her back. They observe the wedding ring—and the secret is theirs.

"Alternatively, a sub-title could be used—although, of course, this is a more clumsy method. By the way, I think that the greatest care should be employed in the introduction of sub-titles—and incidentally in the writing of them. Indeed, at one time I held the opinion that they should be dispensed with altogether; however, since I have seen a recent German film in which my ideal was attained, I have altered my views. I found that watching the flow of moving pictures for nearly two hours without a single break produced a distinct strain upon the eyes as well as upon the brain, and I have now come to the conclusion that sub-titles are necessary, if only because they are restful. Incidentally, they enable the author—if he is allowed to edit them—to instil something of his own personality into a picture.

"By the way, speaking as a cinema-goer, I think that the brief rest-pauses provided

Filming a riverside scene for "The Happy Ending," by Ian Hay.

The Gaumont Co., Ltd.

by the sub-titles are quite sufficient. It is to be hoped that the cinema proprietors will not develop the present tendency to introduce long intervals into their programmes. We have quite enough of that sort of thing in the theatre."

"Do you consider that the names of well-known authors are a draw upon the screen?" I asked.

"No; there may be a few who will be able to earn large salaries as scenario writers for the screen, but when it comes to the appeal to the public, it is only the actors who count. I believe that if the name of the author were deleted from every play-bill in London it would not make any appreciable difference to the success of the show. And, except where a film is trading upon the popularity of the novel from which it has been adapted, the same remark applies to the cinema.

"People do not say, 'Have you seen the film of Ian Hay's "Happy Ending"?' They say, 'Have you seen Fay Compton and Jack Buchanan in "The Happy Ending"?'

"Similarly, when writing a play, I have found myself building my characters round the personality of certain actors. 'This is an Ena Grossmith part,' I say to myself—or 'Now, what would Arthur Bourchier do or say in this situation?'

"In short, in a play, either for stage or screen, the main interest of the public is focused upon the players, and it is only in the novel that the author can express his own personality."

"SAPPER."

"SAPPER" (Lt.-Col. H. C. McNeile) contends that unless an author considers that a film made from one of his novels is definitely harmful to his reputation, he should not mind to what extent the original story is altered for cinema purposes.

"To give the film people their due," he said, "they almost invariably announce that their version of a story is 'adapted' from the original, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for any discrepancies.

"I shouldn't dream of telling a film producer how to make the moving picture version of one of my stories. He's the expert, and he knows best.

"Suppose, for the sake of analogy, that Mr. Charles Chaplin, after creating 'The Woman of Paris' specially for the screen, were to ask me to make a novel from it. I should expect him to show me the picture and then leave the rest to me. If he were to insist upon standing at my elbow and offering hints as to how the novel should be constructed I should simply hand over the pen and paper and tell him to do the job himself.

"Conversely, I do not think that an author can be of any real help to a film producer unless he happens to possess an intimate knowledge of film technique in all its branches. True, if, when the picture is completed, there are certain features with which he does not agree, he may offer criticism—and, speaking from personal experience, I think his suggestions would be welcomed—though whether they would be acted upon or not is another matter.

"Personally I realize that my stories must necessarily undergo considerable revision at the hands of the scenario writers before they are suitable for filming. For one thing, most of my novels are lacking in the feminine element, which is all-important in a film play. A cinema drama without a love story of some sort running through it would be about as popular as a pantomime without a principal boy. Quite apart from what is commonly called 'sex-appeal' the feminine element in a film is of tremendous pictorial value. Beautiful women, with an ever-changing variety of frocks, provide an unfailing pleasure to the eye—and, after all, it is entirely through the eye that the cinema appeals to our emotions.

"I will let you into a secret. When I wrote the first Bull-Dog Drummond story I made a grave mistake. Never dreaming that there would be a demand for sequels, I plunged the poor devil into matrimony. And in a popular film, a hero married is a hero marred. Indeed, even in the development of subsequent novels in which he figures I have been sorely tempted to provide him with a divorce or a bereavement, but I really haven't the heart to do either.

"The film producers, however, are not so squeamish. They have surmounted the problem by simply ignoring his previous affairs, and, in the picture now being made—'Bull-Dog Drummond's Third Round'—they let him marry the girl in the end. By the way, I visited the studio a few days ago and watched them at work. It looks like being a first-class picture, and

Jack Buchanan makes an excellent Drummond."

"Do you think that the popularity of the cinema has any effect upon the reading of novels?" I asked.

"Not in the least. So long as there are cosy firesides, comfortable arm-chairs, pipes, and boxes of chocolates, the novel-reading habit will not decline. What the picture palace does affect, however, is the small provincial theatre. When people living away from the big towns visit a cinema, even if they pay only a few pence for their seats, they see the same play with the same 'stars' as previously shown at an expensive cinema in London. But if they go to see a spoken drama they have to pay for a shorter performance, given, more often than not, by a very third-rate touring company. Under these conditions the smaller theatres cannot compete with the picture palaces.

"The popularity of the film being on the increase, there is one tendency which I greatly deplore—I am speaking now as a member of the public—and that is the poisonous propaganda of class hatred which it is spreading amongst the masses. In nine out of every ten 'dramas,' most of which are foreign, there are scenes in which the villain—who invariably belongs to the 'upper ten'—is depicted as living in a gilded palace, surrounded by dozens of powdered flunkeys, lavishing his ill-gotten wealth upon champagne parties and 'orgies' in the company of ladies of doubtful reputation. I know that all these things were part of the stock-in-trade of the old-fashioned melodrama, but when portrayed on the stage they were, after all, 'only a play,' and the audiences, though unsophisticated, realized this fact. But on the screen, with all its wonderful vividness and realism, and its boast of being 'true to life,' many of these scenes are accepted by a certain section of the public as faithful representations of the way in which the 'idle rich' live at the expense of the working classes. It is a dangerous—and in some cases deliberate—form of revolutionary propaganda, and it constitutes a real menace."

A thrilling moment in "Bull-Dog Drummond's Third Round," from the popular story by "Sapper."

Astra-National Films.

AT THE CENOTAPH

By

ALBERT KINROSS

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

LIKE so many men who, passing down Whitehall, raise their hats when they come to the Cenotaph, Basil Fleming was always aware of certain faces and certain names which rose uppermost as he saluted; so that for him the Great War memorial, inscribed simply to "The Glorious Dead," was a perpetual reminder of James Bickett, whom he had loved, of Ned Harkness, his pal of pals, of George Vane, with whom he had spent three good leaves in Salonica, and, strangely enough, of Sharman.

Bickett had been the divisional general whom he had served under in France; he had been on his staff for a brief three months, but he would never forget him. Bickett had had a magnetism that attracted men, and—alas! bullets; a "gentleman unafraid," if ever there was one. Ned Harkness was in the battalion—dear old Ned! First senior captain, then second-in-command, and then—glory. They had played Rugger together for Cambridge. Next came Vane. They had known one another but slightly at home; out there they had become intimate—the same tastes, the same temperament; it was a blow when Vane crossed over. And, lastly, there was Sharman, the battalion M.O., a young fellow fresh from the hospitals. Why he remembered Sharman he could not say, except that he had meant to lose money to him at poker, a good deal of money, some seventy or eighty pounds, and then the shell had come over that had dished everything. This had happened in the summer of 1917, when they were in blistering Macedonia. He could see the parched landscape, the hills blackened with grass-fires, the sullen river, the fever-laden lakes, and, always, facing them, those iron-grey mountains, touching the sky, an impassable barrier, like a wall. In their folds lay the Bulgar enemy. Now and again the two armies would exchange shell for shell. Otherwise, there was little doing. He would see all this as he walked down Whitehall on his way to the flat in Victoria Street. Sometimes he wondered what other men were seeing. France, it would be—mostly France.

They had played poker three or four nights a week between mess and bedtime; there was nothing much else to do; and he, Fleming, had been drawn in—he wasn't keen on the game; he called it a "slow poison." It was, when you played to win and when you couldn't afford to lose. Sharman had been like that. He must have done pretty well till Fleming took over the company; he had a thick wad of notes and rather an air of victory. The company then had its own little camp, and Boyle, one of the subalterns, had rigged up a mess-hut out of planks and poles and iron sheeting he had snaffled from the sappers. Boyle had roughed it in Canada, and was handy in these matters. There was a table three planks wide, and you sat on a couple of benches carved out of the naked soil, half-a-dozen of you or so, and fought with the flies for your grub, or wrote letters, or played poker. Boyle would collect three or four men, always including Sharman, and Fleming would join in, and because he wasn't particularly keen and had slightly more than average luck, he usually won. This seemed to annoy Sharman, and a man who gets annoyed isn't much use at poker. Fleming would say "No" and "No" and "No," and when he struck a hand or picked up something good he would back it; and mostly he won, because he didn't care much whether he won or lost and could afford either. Sharman couldn't. Fleming learnt that he was a married man with a wife and kid at home, and only his pay to live on, and Fleming had won a good deal of money, mostly from Sharman, when he made up his mind that next time he would lose; lose on purpose. He didn't want the fellow's money, and he could see that Sharman was

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feeling it — he'd been rather unpleasant the last two evenings, and the game had resolved itself into a bit of a duel, the other men looking on at these two experts; and Sharman had said that he preferred a "sporting game," the inference being that Fleming was rather too fond of backing certainties. But to-night, after this last tussle, Fleming had quite definitely made up his mind that next time he'd let the doctor get his money back. The beggar needed it, and he didn't. There was no next time, for Sharman, coming out of the hut, was smashed up by a shell; just one of those stray shells that occasionally came over—he and another man. Rotten luck — the rottenest luck! Everybody said so. Fleming had just gone down to the horse lines, ten minutes away —his pony was getting over a touch of colic. It was only the next morning that he heard about Sharman; and to-day, five years later, he still had a couple of cheques on Sharman's agents stowed away somewhere; for he seemed to have captured the last of that wad of notes. He hadn't presented the cheques; it was one way of letting Sharman down easy; but he had gone ahead with the M.O.'s money. There had been quite a lot of it, seventy or eighty pounds, he remembered, and Sharman had done pretty well, it seemed, till he turned up and spoilt things. But that night he had quite definitely determined that the next time they played he would lose, and the next as well, and the next, if need be. After all, the other was a married man with a wife and kid, and he, Fleming, was unattached and pretty comfortable. That is why, all these years after, this thing, unfulfilled, seemed still alive; so that, whenever he passed the Cenotaph and recalled James Bickett, whom he had loved, and Ned Harkness, his pal of pals, and George Vane, with whom he had had three good leaves in Salonica, he likewise saw Sharman. It didn't matter, of course; but he would have liked to let the fellow get straight. If he had, he would probably have forgotten all

"Mrs. Sharman?" he said. "I knew

your husband out in Salonica.'

about him. They had never been friends. It was only this fanciful debt, or whatever it was, that made him remember.

Sometimes Fleming crossed over to the Cenotaph itself, looked at the wreaths and flowers laid down at its foot, and read the inscriptions; you felt here that England had a memory and a heart. One day when he had crossed over, there was no one else, except a youngish woman in black and a little boy. Her face struck him; he looked twice at her. If ever he married, he thought, it would be a woman like that, dark and slender—and faithful. Her eyes attested this, her errand. She had a wreath of fresh-cut roses, damask and white against the green of leaves. She laid it down and turned. A card was on the wreath. Fleming read it. "In proud and ever-loving memory of our dear husband and father," it said, "Captain Dennis Sharman, R.A.M.C. From Dennie and Fay. 16th September, 1917."

That was the date right enough; and these must be the "wife and kid" he had heard of. They were still there, looking at a great offering of palms and ribbons deposited by some visiting statesman. Fleming noticed that Mrs. Sharman's dress, though neat, was worn, her shoes not of the best or newest; and Dennie, too, was a trifle shabby—trim, but the bright sunlight made the blue serge of his sailor's suit show thin and shiny. "Perhaps," thought Fleming, "they can do with it."

He raised his hard felt hat.

"Mrs. Sharman?" he said. "I knew your husband out in Salonica. I was with him on the night the shell came over or shortly before. My name's Fleming."

Mrs. Sharman's dark eyes were resting on him. She saw a man, tall and well set up, perfectly yet quietly dressed, bronzed and rather handsome.

"You must be the Captain Fleming he wrote about?"

"There was nothing much to write about, except that I still owe him a good deal of money. You see, we'd been playing cards——"

"Only that kind of debt?" She said it coldly, as though it scarcely interested her.

"And yet——" thought Fleming.

" I'll send it on to you, if you care to have it," he added, aloud. " I've always meant to pay, but I didn't quite know how."

" My address is on the other side of that card—if you insist." She had indicated her wreath of white and damask roses—he divined it now an extravagance and richer than she could afford—and she was slightly hostile, as though Sharman had been hostile in the letter to which she had referred. She bowed to him quietly, gave her hand to the little boy, and moved away. It had been a curious meeting.

Fleming followed them with his eyes as they crossed over. She was proud, she was poor, and very lovely. Probably she worked in an office or something ; and she wouldn't marry again because of Sharman. Still, she made it easier to understand why that poor beggar had been so keen to win. He read the address which was engraved on the other side of the card : 8, Holly Road, Pollard's Hill, Norbury, S.W.16. He made a note of it. Some queer suburb, evidently ; it was rather a mouthful. He walked across the two parks and, in the writing-room of his club, he sat down and made out a cheque for eighty pounds. He posted it to Mrs. Sharman. " Please don't have the slightest hesitation in accepting this," he said ; " it ought to be more, for there's five years' interest on top of it which I've omitted. It's a debt of honour, and they're supposed to come first ; and, really, I'm grateful for the chance of getting square." And here he thought it would end, and that next time he passed the Cenotaph he would be quit of Sharman ; but two days later he found her answer. " I do not know whether I ought to accept all that money," she wrote, " and before I do, will you come out one afternoon and see me ? "

HE went the next day, driving down in his two-seater. He found a tiny house in an unmade road bordering fields on the edge of London. Dennie, the little boy, was playing in the patch of front garden, bright-eyed, dark, like his mother, friendly and unafraid.

" You're Captain Fleming, and you fought in the war with Dad, didn't you ? " he asked. " Is that your car ? "

" I'll lend it you, Dennie."

There was no maid and the door stood open.

Dennie ran in with the news and Fay Sharman was ready to receive her visitor, in a small drawing-room, gay and sunny, yet, somehow, worn and, perhaps, a trifle cheap.

" It was good of you to come out to us," she began.

On the piano stood Sharman's photograph in uniform, and his two medals shone, polished and bright, in a case that was under glass. A cat came in and examined the stranger.

Mrs. Sharman had put a brass kettle on a spirit lamp and was measuring tea out of a silver caddy. " How did you find your way ? " she asked.

" I looked it out on the map." He was admiring her fine and delicate hands with the long fingers.

Beautiful she sat there, yet distant ; but it was she who first broached the matter of that cheque. Dennie, armed with a slice of cake, had left them, eager to make the most of Fleming's car.

" I've really no claim to all that money," she had begun ; " and, of course, you could have paid it in to Dennis's agents."

" I ought to have done." He was humouring her.

" I've really no claim," she repeated.

" Why not ? I lost it ; your husband won it. It would have been paid ages ago, only there wasn't time. It's followed me about rather, ever since——" Then he saw the tears in her eyes. Then she broke down.

" If I take it," she sobbed, " it'll save our home ; it'll give us a chance. Perhaps—perhaps—I ought to call it a loan—but it's just as if—as if it had come by a miracle." She dried her eyes. " I oughtn't to do this," she ended ; " it isn't fair, is it ? But I've been under a strain."

" I'm glad it's over," said Fleming ; and, " By Gad, no more strains for her, if I can help it ! " he thought, though he didn't quite see how.

" You and Dennis didn't hit it off," she was saying.

" I don't know that we disagreed," he answered. " It's my luck to be here " ; and next he told her how but for his pony, that had had an attack of colic, he might not have been.

They sat on over a cigarette, and now she had thawed ; he even seemed in some measure to have won her confidence.

" You see, we settled down here," she explained ; " it was Dennis's last year at the hospital, and it wasn't so bad for that, and when he came back it would have been a home ; and Dennie was born here. It was the best we could do. We'd spent nearly all our money ; but afterwards there was his pay—he let us have it all, every penny of it. He must have gone without many things himself. Sometimes I've wondered what he lived on."

Fleming could guess. That's why the beggar had been so extra keen to win.

" But the last letter I had from him, he did say he'd been forced to draw a cheque or two, and would I forgive him ? "

Fleming knew those cheques. He still had them put away somewhere.

" He'd pay them back, he said ; but I think that he was mistaken—perhaps he'd meant to. Afterwards, there was only the pension ; it isn't much ; and I didn't want to go out to work, because of Dennie. I did dressmaking here, or tried to, but nowadays people buy their things ready-made ; it's not like it used to be."

She had married at twenty, just boy and girl, one of those war marriages he had heard of—everybody was against it. But who could blame her, he thought, and who could blame Sharman ?

" I've had paying guests—boarders," she had pursued. " I hoped to go on with them ; but Norbury's so out of the way, no one wants to stay here. I should have thought of that, but when the war was on you didn't think of those things, did you ? But now I'll be able to advertise again ; you've made everything look brighter."

He knew it was only a respite, though, of course, she might get somebody—a man like himself, who admired her. A cad, perhaps——

" If you hear of anybody," she was saying. " I'm good at cooking, and I would make them comfortable ; and Dennie isn't in the way."

Impulse prompted him to answer, " What about me ? " But not this time. The flat in Victoria Street was only taken furnished by the month ; he had a place of his own in the North, but business kept him in London. He rose to go. " If I hear of anybody," he said, " I'll send them on."

ON the way home, driving in his car, a sudden panic seized him. Perhaps some other fellow would get in first. Yes, he'd venture. With a car, it wouldn't be so out of the way, and if he wanted a bed in town, there was the club.

He sat down that evening and made her a fair offer. He was looking for quarters, he said ; perhaps she might be willing to have him as a guest ; he would pay half the running expenses of the house, if that would suit her.

It did.

Perhaps she would like to take Dennie away for a holiday. He would move in a few weeks later.

That again suited her, and when they met for the third time she was tanned and well and happy.

Fleming had his own two rooms on the first floor—he recognized the best arm-chair lugged up here from the drawing-room ; he had his daily work that took him into town, his exercise that took him to Lord's, or Queen's, or to the links. She made him comfortable ; she took a pride in it ; there was a little maid now and a char-woman ; and Dennie was learning all about the car and often took long rides with him.

It was a situation that needed tact, and Fleming had it. Nor had he any mind to dispel her dream, her faith and loyalty to the departed. In any affair you either go backward or forward, he argued. He hoped to go forward. She had already found him different from what she had expected ; so much was evident, or he had not been there.

Once or twice, indeed, she had turned up those last two letters from Sharman, wherein he had written disparagingly of a " Captain Fleming—a fellow who has taken over B Company. They say he's a good soldier ; but he's not much of a sportsman, so I've found." That was the gist of it. And once or twice she had turned up Sharman's " effects," piously kept in a locked drawer ; his cigarette-case, bent and twisted, his watch on its strap, and about thirteen francs in Greek money. He had been self-sacrificing, had gone without things ; yet perhaps he had been lucky at cards. He always said so. And, of course, if he had won sums like eighty pounds, he could go on for a long while. But it wasn't quite fair to the other men to count on it ; and if he had lost. . . . Then the first doubt crept into her. She put it away, re-living their year together before Dennis went out. But he had been wrong ; Fleming was a pretty good sports-man.

One day he drove back to Norbury with a Mrs. Hamilton, whom he called " Jane," a dashing lady, in wonderful clothes, who stayed for tea, admired everything, and whom he drove back into town for dinner. This woman surprised Fay Sharman by making her feel the least bit jealous. She had felt jealous ; she admitted it, as she sat on that evening in her lonely drawing-room, between the photograph of Sharman that stood on the piano and the glass case with the two medals. Fleming, she had noted, had five, carelessly stuck away in a drawer of his dressing-table. " They don't mean anything," he had said, " except luck."

She was still up when he returned.

" Who is Mrs. Hamilton ? " she asked.

" A lady who wants to marry me," he answered, laughing.

" Aren't you very—conceited ? "

" She says so—they do, nowadays."

" Only when they're brazen."

" I must tell Jane that she's brazen," he laughed ; " she is, rather."

" And are you going to marry her ? "

He looked at her, still smiling. " Not without your permission—and Dennie's," he added.

" Good night," she said, and in her room

she prayed that she might still be faithful. Perhaps she oughtn't to have this man here; perhaps—it would be lonely without him and precarious—she thought of Dennie. The tears were in her eyes again. Life hadn't been too kind to her.

That was the beginning. She felt herself weakening. There had only been one man in her life; there would never be another. So she had resolved; and she had held out, refusing, once, twice—but, after Dennis! She had said "No," gently but unshakably. If this thing kept on, Fleming must go; rather he went than such a betrayal. She sat now entrenched behind her photographs and her war medals. And yet, she was happy. Her cares were ended, her worries, and sometimes she found herself singing aloud as she went over the house—a home was a home. She wondered occasionally why a man, evidently well off, evidently able to please himself, should care for such a little place in such an out-of-the-way corner. And one day she flushed. It could not be on account of her; but still, it might be. And next her friend Gladys Harper, who was nothing if not downright, to whom she had put the question, answered: "You silly little fool, don't you see he's in love with you? I wish it was me."

She brooded over that when Gladys was gone. "I'll have to get rid of him," she thought; and now she was facing that frequent dilemma of a charming woman: she wanted him to go and she wanted him to stay. She would miss his kindness, his attentions; the money didn't count for much—there was something else. He was thoughtful; he had sent in a nurse when she and Dennie were down with "flu" that winter; there were always flowers in the house, and she loved flowers; he had made such business as lay between them more than easy, forestalling her, and trusting her—just as though she had been his wife. The word came to her. It wasn't distasteful; and, because it wasn't distasteful, she felt angry.

He must leave, she thought; better her old struggles, better her old despair, than this! And yet she knew that at a sign from her, a word, she could be Mrs. Fleming. But she wasn't going to be Mrs. Fleming—never—never! Nor Mrs. anybody but Fay Sharman!

SHE had gone so far when the letter came offering her the two children. It was from her sister and brother-in-law out in India. Some friends of theirs were bringing the children home because of the climate, and it might be a help to her; would she take them? They could pay a hundred a year for each child. They were good children and not much trouble. She read no further. If need be, here was a way of escape, timely, as though sent to her. If this thing went too far, she could stand alone.

She said nothing about it for the present; but it made a difference. Fleming noted her added confidence. It pleased him; and then one evening as they walked over the fields he could resist no longer. It might have been the spring, the birds in song; it might have been their own youth calling.

"Fay, I love you," he said, quite simply, a hand on her arm.

She did not draw away from him.

She too was feeling the need of love, the year's awakening and its wonder.

"It can't be," she whispered, and shook her head; "Basil, it can't be."

He had not heard or would not hear. He held her tightly with both hands now: his lips were on hers and she was yielding, slipping away from all she had clung to. She shook herself free. "No—no," she said, "not that!"

"Why not?"

It was a stupid question and he knew its answer.

"Forgive me?" he said. "Let's forget it—if one can forget."

She came back to him.

"You'll have to go, Basil," she answered; "perhaps it's all been a mistake."

"We'll forget it."

"You'll have to go," she repeated. She was firm and resolute now; more resolute than he had ever seen her.

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

For a hundred yards there was silence.

"And if I go, what's to become of you, Fay?"

"I shall manage."

She told him then of the offer that had come from India.

"I'm glad, for your sake; but we were happy here—you, Dennie, and I," he said. "You really want me to go?"

"You must."

She said it with such force that he caught an inkling. If she was afraid of him, she was afraid of herself.

"All right," he said; "but if I go, we'll still be friends?"

She put an arm through his. "Yes, Basil"; and then, "I'll never forget you."

There was some hope in that, he thought. He was not standing still. He meant something to her; but friendship—how he hated the word between her and him!

"You still want me to go?" he asked, next morning.

"Yes; I'm writing out to India to-day."

He looked at her thoughtfully. "I suppose it's natural," he said. "There's no

"Fay, I love you," he said, quite simply.
"It can't be," she whispered. "Basil, it can't be."

standing still; one either goes backward or forward."

"I don't," she answered, believing it. "I don't," she said again.

When Dennie heard, he tried hard not to cry. "I want Uncle Basil," he said; "I don't want two strange children out of India."

Fleming, in the car, went hunting for a furnished flat. He would leave as soon as possible. It hurt, being there unwanted; it embarrassed her too, he felt. The whole thing, from the very start, had been impetuous, rather mad, rather outside reality; all the best things were, he thought; and he was conscious of her beauty as never before. He found a flat and dined mostly in town till he could move into it. This friendship she had offered him would last a little while; then they would drift farther and farther apart; then it would all be over. It might even end like that, he reflected; life had a way of sundering people.

IT was on one of these awkward days that Fay Sharman, when tidying up things—came across an old pocket-book. It was stowed away in a drawer, an old pigskin pocket-book, discoloured and torn, a thing he might have carried with him through the war. Men were queer; they didn't throw old things away—not old things like that. Should she throw it away? She had thrown old things of his away—old socks, an old tobacco-pouch, split and torn. She turned over the faded leather. It seemed empty. She looked inside. Within was a receipt for a registered letter, the card of a Major somebody, yellow with age, and two discoloured bits of paper. She took these out—they couldn't be of any value. She straightened them, unfolded them, and discovered that each was a cheque, stamped and signed and payable to "Captain Basil Fleming." Her heart beat faster. She knew the form; it was Holt and Co.'s, Dennis's old agents, on whom she had drawn when they lived on his pay after he had gone out to Salonica. The signature was "Dennis Sharman, Capt. R.A.M.C." Eight pounds—six pounds—that was fourteen pounds. Why hadn't Fleming presented them? These must be the two cheques Dennis had written about—she had thought he must have been mistaken, meaning to draw them, perhaps. And then doubt came, and more doubt. Fleming hadn't owed that debt of eighty pounds; on the contrary, they were in *his* debt; and Dennis—what about Dennis? Fleming must tell her.

She had those two discoloured cheques in readiness that night when he returned, and that old torn pigskin pocket-book.

"I found this in your room," she said; "perhaps I ought to have let it alone—and these." She had spread the two cheques before him.

"Oh, yes; they don't matter. Is that where they were?" And as her eyes pressed him and he knew her to be no fool, "Perhaps I ought to have deducted them from the eighty pounds," he added. "I'd clean forgotten." He came out pat with it.

"I—I wonder whether you ever owed Dennis that eighty pounds?"

"Of course I did." He was sure of that. She looked at him searchingly.

"Was Dennis winning and losing all that money at cards?" she asked.

"Winning most of it."

"Till you came? That's why he disliked you?" She could see it now.

"Did he? I'm sorry."

She looked at him hard. "You're leaving," she said; "I'd like to know the truth. Perhaps some time——" She had meant to say that what she owed she would pay back, if she owed anything. "And it was more than money," she ran on; "without you—without your help——"

"Aren't you taking this too seriously? Sit down, Fay; I'll tell you," he had interposed. "I really was in Sharman's debt, and I'd meant to pay him; every time I passed the Cenotaph it reminded me"; and he told her the story of how he had meant to lose, told it from beginning to end—what did it matter? "You see, he had a wife and kid, and I had nobody," he ended; "that's how I saw it."

"You were thinking of me, of me and Dennie, years before we met?"

"It looks like it," he answered. "And when I saw you there and didn't know who you were, there was something—I looked twice at you, didn't I? and I read the name on the card——"

"I noticed it."

"I said to myself, if ever I married, it'd be you or someone very like you."

"You've thought of me all these years, really." She had softened. She was seeing him as the man her heart longed for; seven years ago she had been a girl, an unformed girl; and even yesterday—— "Don't go, Basil," she whispered; for, somehow, she was in his arms again, and he was holding her close, close; and next their lips met. This time she stayed.

And so it happens that whenever Basil Fleming, passing up or down Whitehall, raises his hat as he comes to the Cenotaph, saluting James Bickett, whom he had loved, Ned Harkness, his pal of pals, George Vane, with whom he had spent three good leaves in Salonica, though he has paid that debt or whatever it was, he still conjures up Sharman. More than ever Dennis Sharman.

THE BLACK DOMINION

By

C. E. BECHHOFER ROBERTS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

This story is written in collaboration with a well-known Professor of Science, so the reader may rest assured that nothing is related that could not actually have happened.

THE *Dædalus*, the eleven-hundred-ton yacht that was also A. B. C. Hawkes's floating laboratory, steamed lazily through the sluggish blue waters of the Mediterranean. Not a cloud was in the sky, but the sun's heat was tempered by a breeze which had sprung up with the dawn, carrying a faint spicy scent from the Algerian coast, that lay on the horizon just visible through the haze. I reclined in a deck-chair and, pipe in mouth, watched A. B. C., as I call him, every now and then drawing up one of the nets that hung over the side of the vessel.

He was still at work on the problem of scale coloration in fishes, a subject where his profound knowledge of physics gave him an enormous advantage over the professional zoologist. These delicate investigations, which would have made the name of a lesser man, were for him just a relaxation from his supremely important researches, but he delighted in them as a statesman will delight in tending his garden. For my part, I was content that the work should go on for ever, provided it was to be carried out in such delightful circumstances.

"This is better, A. B. C., than discovering Atlantean islands," I said, reminiscently.

He nodded and picked a very beautiful little fish out of a mesh in the net. He turned it over gently in his hand and examined the delicate purple markings through a magnifying glass. Evidently it did not present any fresh features of interest, and he threw it back into the water.

"Heigh-ho, another netful of rubbish!" he said. "It's no use, friend Johnstone; I can't get the specimens I want out here. We must go inshore."

He strolled up to the bridge, his short, round figure throwing a squat shadow on the deck, and the head of the *Dædalus* turned shorewards. The mist was rising and the long, sweeping lines of the cliffs grew clearer. Of villages there were no signs, but sometimes groves of slender palm-trees clustered to the water's edge. When we had come within a quarter of a mile of the shore, the water became too shallow for the *Dædalus*, despite her small draught; and we decided to go off in the small electric launch after the specimens. A. B. C. and I dropped down a rope ladder into the boat and pushed off. In a few minutes we were looking for a convenient place to land.

"It's a derelict coast, this," mused my friend, with mock sadness. "Civilization has robbed it of the only human interest it ever had—piracy. Time was when Berber frigates swept the seas from the Bosphorus to Dover, but to-day Algeria is merely a French colony, producing dates and wine

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instead of pirates and slavers. Ruin of a thriving industry; isn't it sad?"

We found a cove in the rocks and ran the launch into it. A. B. C. adjusted a little glass of some kind, which cut off the glare of the sun on the water—I forget what he called it—and inspected the sand beneath the tiny rippling waves. Occasionally he took a specimen-net and delved into the sand, transferring one or two objects to the small tank we carried in the bows. I continued peaceably to smoke.

Then I saw him throw his head back, with a surprised look on his good-natured face under the flaming red hair.

"Can you hear anything?" he said.

I listened for a moment.

"There seems to be something," I agreed. "It sounds like a machine. Is it on board the yacht?"

"No, it isn't in that direction. But a factory on the pirate coast is an unlikely phenomenon. Queer!" And he gave his attention again to his fishing.

It was I who next broke the silence a quarter of an hour later.

"An event!" I cried. "Another vessel!"

Craning my head over the rocks, I could see a small steamer coming our way.

"If she's not careful," A. B. C. remarked, watching her, "she'll run ashore. You'd think she was heading this side of the *Dædalus*—and, by Helmholtz, she is!"

Indeed the steamer was steering a course near the shore. She zigzagged towards us, without reducing speed.

"She'll pile herself on the rocks if she isn't careful," I remarked.

Suddenly Hawkes grasped me by the shoulder.

"Down!" he whispered sharply. "Put out your pipe! They can't see us here."

We lay there, scarcely breathing. The side of the strange vessel passed barely twenty yards away, and her wash made our little craft jump in its rocky hiding-place. I heard A. B. C.'s voice in my ear.

"They haven't seen us," he said. "They're too intent on the *Dædalus*. Man, they had guns trained on her! There's something very odd about this place. It must be looked into. Are you game?"

"It's probably an innocent date-packing factory," I said, "and they suspect the *Dædalus* as the vessel of a rival firm."

"Maybe," said A. B. C., "but since we're here we may as well replace conjecture by facts."

This was a favourite phrase of his, and warned me that opposition was hopeless. Personally, I had no wish to exchange the comforts of lounging for shore adventures, but I philosophically fell in with his suggestion.

There was no danger of the launch's going astray, and we left it and began to climb the white cliff.

IN a few minutes we reached the top. Instead of the bare country we expected, we found ourselves overlooking a broad valley full of clustering date-palms. In the middle were one or two breaks in the trees, which looked as if they might be clearings; but there was no sign that the place was inhabited.

We watched the mysterious steamer turn head on to the shore; then it seemed to disappear into it. For a moment it vanished altogether, but then we saw its funnel again, moving among the trees.

"I've got it," said Hawkes. "There's a tunnel in the cliff. That must be the landing-place over there where the trees open up. This *is* interesting."

We made our way along the top of the cliff towards the forest. As we approached it, we saw that it was surrounded by a wire fence, a strange object to meet with in so desolate a part of the world. I was just about to approach it when A. B. C. pulled me roughly back by the shoulder.

"Steady, my boy, steady," he said. "I don't altogether like the look of this. Ah, I thought so!" And he pointed to some skeletons of animals that lay on either side of the wire.

"I wonder," he said, "why an electric fence is necessary here? What have they got to keep in or keep out?"

We walked on by the fence, and then, to our astonishment, we saw two white men lying just inside it.

Practically naked, their bodies were emaciated and filthy. Their arms were puffed and pitted in a fashion horrible to behold. At first I thought they were dead, but, as we came up, they rolled their eyes heavily towards us.

"Who are you?" said A. B. C.

After a few moments one of them moved his swollen lips and murmured something. I saw with a shudder that his mouth was swollen and inflamed, and a little stream of saliva and blood flowed down his beard.

Hawkes caught more of the mumbled words than I, and he spoke again, but in French.

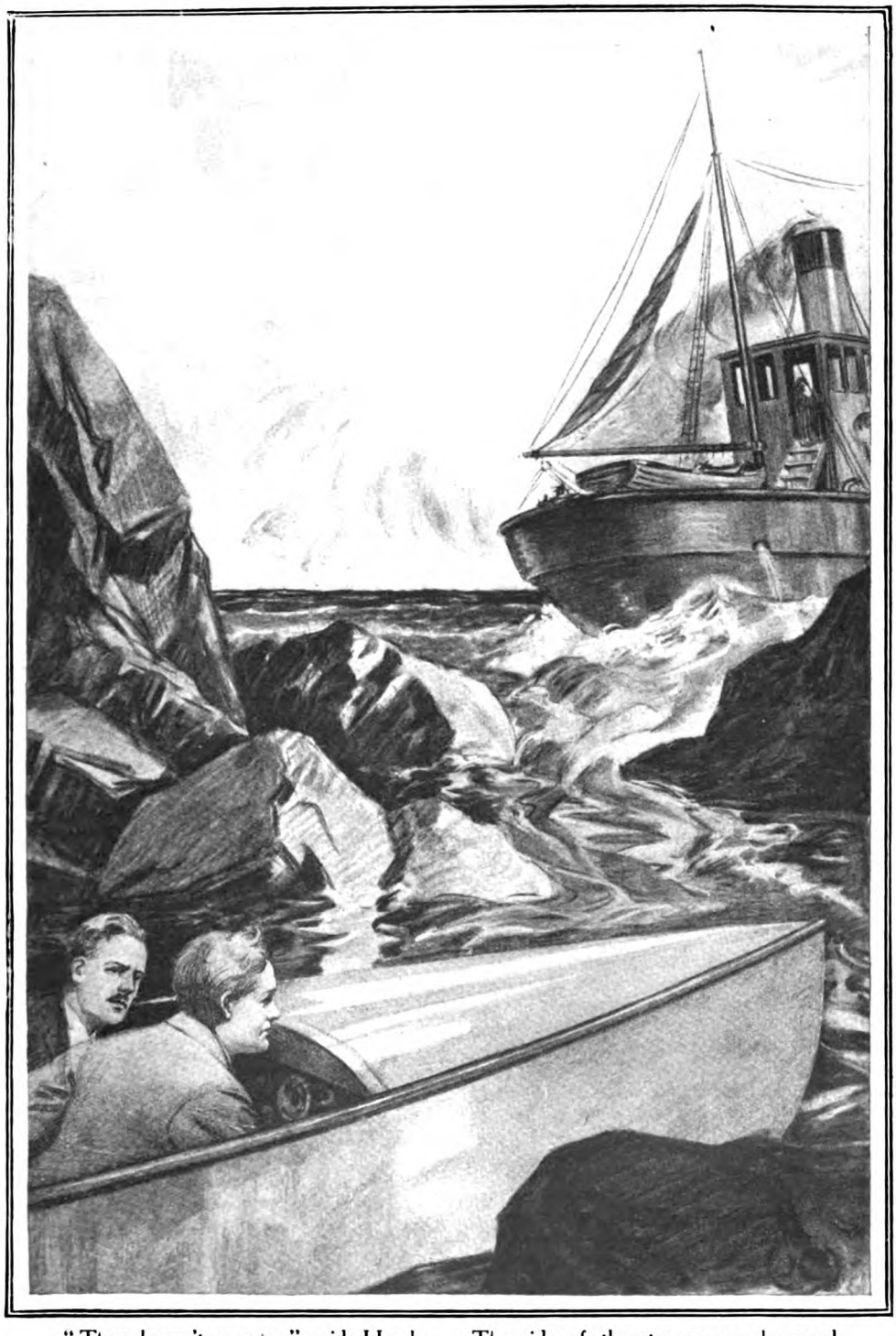
The man nodded with a monstrous weariness, and the eyes of his companion flickered.

There was another long pause. Then the answer came. "*Esclaves.*"

"Slaves!" said A. B. C. to me. "Impossible. This must be a madhouse."

"Or a French criminal station," I suggested. "A kind of Devil's Island."

Hawkes put another question, pointing to their mutilated arms.



"They haven't seen us," said Hawkes. The side of the strange vessel passed barely twenty yards away, and her wash made our little craft jump in its rocky hiding-place.

The man closed his eyes in exhaustion. After a while he swallowed painfully and whispered, "*Empoisonné.*"

"Poisoned? What does he mean?" I stammered.

But the wretches seemed unable to answer any more questions. "We may as well look into this a little farther," said A. B. C., and we left them lying there.

In a minute or two we came in sight of the harbour, where the steamer was standing. Half-a-dozen negroes in red uniform were on guard with rifles; a gangway had been thrown from the concrete quay to the deck of the vessel, on which figures were moving. We saw a man carried ashore on a stretcher, followed by a line of white men, walking in couples, who stumbled along as if they were unused to the bright light. As we watched, one of them fell, dragging his companion down with him. A whiplash curved through the air and wound itself round the men's backs.

"They're manacled together, A. B. C.!" I cried. "It's scandalous. Where are the French officers? I'd like to know who's supposed to be in charge of these blacks."

Hawkes said nothing, but his face was taut with interest. We pushed on towards some rising ground. The distant chug-chug of the machine was insistent now, and we heard also an intermittent noise of hammering.

Climbing the knoll, we saw whence this came. About a quarter of a mile away, five white men were working on the wire fence. A negro guard in the same red uniform as the guards on the quay stood beside them, rifle in hand.

What immediately struck us, to the exclusion of all other impressions, was that they appeared to be working with extraordinary rapidity. So swiftly did their hands move that we could hardly follow them—and this was true of all their actions. I was reminded of a cinematograph film turned at double speed. Their agility was in amazing contrast with the languor of the poor fellows we had spoken to a few minutes before.

One of them must have seen us, for, turning to the guard like a galvanized marionette, he stretched out his hand towards us, said something, and turned again to his work—all this in less than a second.

The negro gave an order, and before we had time to realize it the prisoners were over the fence and coming towards us. I could swear that the swiftest runner in the world never covered a quarter of a mile as fast. It cannot have been more than half a minute before they surrounded and pinioned us.

The negro was coming up at a normal pace, and we were able to observe our captors. There was that amazing quickness about all their movements. Their breath, too, came in swift pants, and the beat of their pulse on our arms was much faster than our own. One of them spoke, but we could not understand him, for his rapid words ran into one another. Their faces were very flushed, and I noticed the dribble of blood-flecked saliva on their beards. Their arms were pitted with scars, some of them still red.

Before I had recovered from my surprise and indignation, the negro arrived and pointed to the gap in the fence. The white men pulled us off there, moving so fast that we were almost dragged off the ground.

I was about to resist, when A. B. C., who by some effort of self-control had remained master of himself, told me to let things take their course.

"It's no use talking to the negro," he said. "We must wait till we meet a white officer."

THEY took us by a road through the forest. We passed other groups of white prisoners, all moving in the same remarkable manner, swiftly and mechanically. I have seen men impelled by terror to such motion, but only for a few seconds, whereas with these it was continuous.

On the way we saw a man lying motionless across the road. At a word from the negro, our captors picked him up and threw him among the trees like a sack of rubbish.

Along a path leading away from the road came a company of white men in single file, carrying sheepskin bags on their backs. They were moving at a runner's pace, but their action was that of a walker. Over their heads in the distance we noticed an erection of complicated steel girders and wheels, whence seemed to come the noise of machinery that we had heard in the launch.

"That's a mine-head," said A. B. C. "Ah, yes; that explains the heavy bags they're carrying and their swollen mouths. These must be quicksilver mines! Whose, I wonder?"

"Are they convicts or lunatics?" I gasped, trying to keep my feet. "I don't understand the mad speed of these and the exhaustion of the others."

"We shall know soon, I suppose," he replied.

At that moment we came in sight of a long, low building of white marble, towards which, it was clear, we were being taken. It seemed a place of importance, for negroes in the red uniform stood on guard before the entrance. It was encircled by tall trees, and a stream ran round three sides of it like a moat.

The sentries came to meet us, and at a command the prisoners loosed us and

hastened away with the same jerky speed, followed by one of the negroes. Our guard stayed behind and appeared to be making a report to a tall black sergeant. The two of them went into the house for a few minutes. Then they returned and motioned to us to enter.

" Now," said A. B. C., " we shall be able to speak effectively. You had better, I think, leave it to me."

THREE of the guards escorted us up a flight of steps into a large room. At one end was a platform on which stood a tall, elaborately-carved ebony chair, covered with skins. On either side of this lay a big native drum and a queer collection of objects—spears, feather fans, tusks, skulls, and necklaces of human bones. It was like the throne-room of some savage chieftain. But, in extreme contrast, on the long tables that lined the walls there stood what was evidently modern scientific apparatus of all kinds—microscopes, galvanometers, centrifuges, and I know not what besides. Everything was in confusion, and A. B. C., tidiest of scientists, winced at a sight so galling to his prejudices.

Almost at once a gong sounded. The red curtain behind the throne was pulled aside and our guards fell on their knees and touched the floor with their foreheads. I expected a French officer to appear.

To my astonishment a huge negro entered.

He slowly ascended the dais and seated himself on the throne. Gigantic in height and girth, his physique was displayed to us in all its enormous proportions, for he wore only a loin cloth and a kind of toga of a purple material over one shoulder. With his vast frame, muscular arms, and long, sinewy fingers, he resembled a colossal gorilla more than a man.

His features were savage, bitter, and crafty, and he looked at us with a blend of vindictiveness and contempt.

An abrupt command brought all the trembling negroes to their feet. The one who had captured us began to speak—in Berber, I suppose—and it was clear from his gestures that he was telling how he found us.

When he finished, the chief, or whoever the negro on the throne was, addressed us in fluent English. So insolent was his tone that every syllable was like a blow.

" Whose spies are you ? " he roared.

" And what does this outrage mean ? " A. B. C. answered.

" Answer my question, you white scum ! Who are you ? "

Hawkes shrugged his shoulders and turned away. The man on the throne made a sign and the guards sprang on us and threw us to the floor. They searched our pockets and bore the booty on a tray to their master.

He glanced through it and picked up a card from Hawkes's case. The whole expression of his face changed and a gleam of surprised satisfaction came over it.

" So you are A. B. C. Hawkes ? " he said. " I ought to have recognized you."

The negroes stood back. We rose to our feet.

" I had not expected such a distinguished visitor," he went on. " I knew you, Hawkes, at Cambridge."

My friend looked intently at the leering monster.

" I recognize you now," he said, slowly. " You used to be a pupil of my assistant, Professor Braund."

" Precisely," said the negro. He shouted a command, and two chairs were brought to us. " Sit down ! "

" I would rather stand," A. B. C. replied.

" Sit down, when I tell you to ! "

" I do not propose to stay here any longer," said Hawkes.

" But you are my prisoner. Do what I tell you. This is Africa, not Cambridge. I give orders here, not you. This is not a white man's country, where the negro must grovel and cringe and serve. This is my empire, where black commands and white obeys ! You did not know there was such a place, I wager. You know it now, Hawkes, eh ? Not long ago a white man defied me to my face—as you would like to do. Look at him now ! "

He pointed out of one of the windows, and our eyes followed his gesture. At the edge of the forest a skeleton hung on a rough cross of wood, bound to it by the arms and feet.

" Don't compel me to do the same with you."

" Who are you, you monster ? " said A. B. C.

" In your laboratory, Hawkes, I was called John Brown. That is not my name. But you have heard of Josiah Keaton."

A shiver ran down my back. I had been in the United States, and this name was known to me, as it is to all Americans—and, I discovered later, to more Englishmen than I imagined—as that of a man who had sworn to revenge the wrongs of his fellow-negroes and their ancestors upon the white races.

For years he and his band gathered strength in the Southern States, surrounding their raids with a savage ritual of barbarism and terror, until at last even the Ku Klux Klan feared to provoke their reprisals. Keaton was merciless, sparing neither man nor woman, guilty or innocent. Cunning,

too, he eluded with ease the attempts of the authorities to capture him. Indeed, so well guarded was his activity that his very name would not have been known but for his innumerable manifestoes, in which in bombastic phraseology he proclaimed his defiance of the world, summoned his partisans to a war of revenge to the death, and prophesied a union of the African and Asiatic peoples against the whites.

"As you see," he went on, "I have transferred my headquarters. My work in America was great and successful; but it was not enough. I sought a more fitting centre for my mission, and I thought of this coast. I need not remind you that it was here that my forefathers held thousands upon thousands of white men in slavery. I was fortunate enough to find this valley, with its hidden harbour, and here I have established my capital. This is only the beginning. Before another decade is past, Josiah Keaton's black dominion will be a menace to your white supremacy; in twenty years we shall conquer you."

The man was a megalomaniac, and a dangerous one.

"Your haunts will be discovered," said A. B. C., coldly, "and you will be driven out like a rat from a drain."

"I think not, white man."

"If your steamer is seen to enter the harbour——"

"It was an accident that you saw it to-day. I have given strict instructions. But the captain was taken ill, and his subordinate, a white renegade—you will recognize the old term—was indiscreet enough to enter while your yacht was in sight. Maybe he wanted us to be discovered. Perhaps—I don't know—perhaps he was tired of being here. Well, he need not stay any longer. There he is—look for yourselves!"

Even while we had been talking, a group of prisoners had gathered round another cross not far from the first. With the same frantic speed we had already wondered at, they were lifting a man upon it. Hawkes and I could bear no more, and turned away. But Keaton watched the scene eagerly.

"You devil!" I cried.

"No, not a devil—an avenging angel," he sneered, grinning at our horror. "Have you never heard of lynching? The only difference between what you do to us and what I do to you is that I perform my executions only upon the guilty. And who of you is not?"

I wondered what ghastly fate was in store for A. B. C. and me.

"You, as a scientist," the negro said to my friend, "will find much to interest you here. Suppose we take a stroll round my domain. Silence!" he roared, as A. B. C. was about to speak.

Resistance was useless. Hawkes whispered to me to be on the look-out for a chance of escape, and we followed the giant into the forest.

HE led us through the trees towards the steel framework in the distance. Fifty yards behind, two negro guards followed.

"This is the main mine," he said, when we reached our destination. "Quicksilver, I need not tell you. You will observe that my methods are most up-to-date. Not only is there no better plant in California for extracting the ore, but I have vastly improved the usual process of condensation. My condensers are made of a modification of Braund's excellent alloy. It is very strong, a good conductor of heat, and it resists the action of both mercury and sulphuric acid."

A. B. C. considered a moment.

"It is a clever idea," he said. "But your design is bad; you are wasting energy."

"You were always pernicketty, Hawkes," replied the negro. "You pride yourself on your neatness, like a fussy old woman."

"A more serious fault," my friend continued, "is that your workmen are unduly exposed to the mercury vapour. Their health and efficiency must suffer."

"What do I care for that, you fool?" said the negro. "Have you seen my labourers? Look at them!"

A group of white men came round a corner, pushing a truck full of ore. Like the others we had seen, they were going about their task with extraordinary rapidity.

"What should I care about saving labour," Keaton chuckled, "with slaves so industrious as these?"

"Slaves!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, slaves," replied Keaton. "Do you think I hire my workmen? A year ago those two men were loafers on the docks at Algeciras. One night they were carried aboard my steamer, and a day or two later were disembarked here with a score of their fellows. A little dose of my treatment, and now see them! They do more in an hour than they ever used to do in a month."

"You torture them?" A. B. C. said.

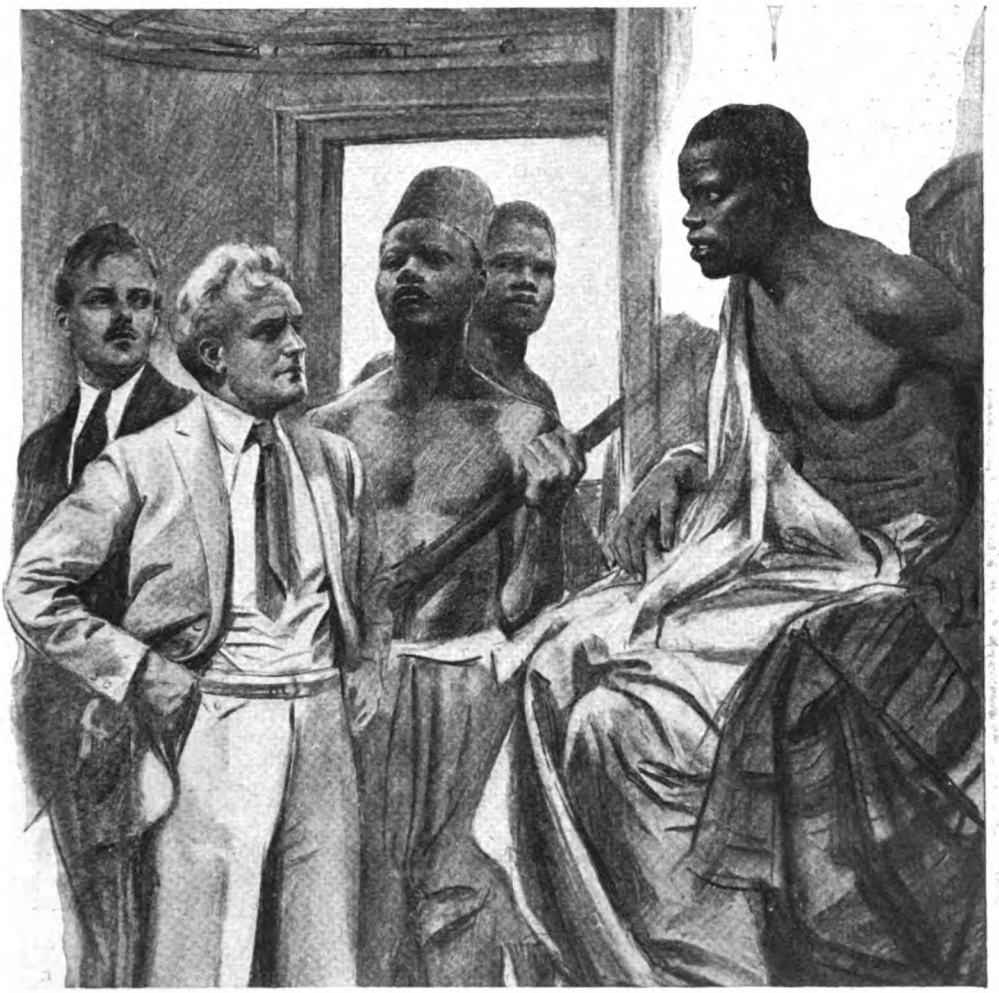
"I have a better method of making them work. I should have thought you would have guessed it by now. Perhaps you remember the German discovery a few years ago that a dose of acid sodium phosphate increased a workman's output beyond its normal degree. The discoverer did not really understand why—his so-called reasons were merely a mask of scientific terms to hide his ignorance.

But I pursued the investigation, with valuable results.

"I discovered that small doses of a certain salt—not acid sodium phosphate, but an allied salt of an alkali metal—produced

"But surely," said Hawkes, interested despite himself, "their vitality soon deteriorates?"

"After two or three years they are worn out; they become like old men. Besides,



The chief addressed us in fluent English. "Whose spies are you?" he roared.

certain products in the blood. From the blood of a man who has been systematically inoculated according to a routine I have worked out, I prepare a serum which, when injected—we always inject in the arm here, as you may have noticed—invigorates to an extraordinary extent. The subject can do from two and a half to three times as much work as a normal man, although he does not always seem to enjoy doing it. Very docile, too, I find my slaves! You have seen them at work. Incredible to anyone but a scientist, isn't it?"

as you suggested in the fullness of your hypocritical white humaneness, the mercury rots their bodies by then. You may meet some of my discards, as I call them, as we walk back."

I remembered the crippled creatures we had seen beside the fence and the one lying on the road.

The negro pointed to a low building dimly to be seen through the trees. "Every now and then we have a clearance," he said. "Some we use to prepare a new supply of serum. Then they and the other discards

are gathered up and thrown into a pit. A few minutes with the gas—they need very little ; oh, yes, I can be economical when it is necessary—and we are rid of them. Once or twice a year my steamer goes out to market the mercury, and to bring back a fresh supply of white labour for the mines."

"So those were new slaves we saw land this morning ?"

"A poor selection. It is a pity the captain had to return in such a hurry. Mostly Maltese—I get little satisfaction out of them. But a Spaniard, a Frenchman, an Englishman or American—any of the nations who have enslaved my people—they are what I prize."

"How do you market your mercury ?" A. B. C. asked.

"I leave that to my agents," said Keaton. "My steamer runs its cargo into a convenient port and there we tranship it to their vessels. They pay me in goods that I need and in munitions that I am collecting here for the hour when I shall equip my army against Africa's enemies."

"Who are your agents ?"

"I transact all my business through the Foreign Commercial Bank."

"The Foreign Commercial Bank ?"

"Sir Marcus Benjamin, the president, and your late colleague, Professor Braund, are my very good friends—I might almost say my partners."

"Do they know what deviltry goes on here ?" I asked him.

"They know my methods. Braund has been pleased to congratulate me upon my scientific attainments. He spent a couple of weeks here last autumn admiring my plant."

"I'll expose them !" I cried.

"They have nothing to fear from you, my white brothers. They know how to cover their tracks. Besides, you are going to stay here and help me."

"We'll do nothing of the kind," said A. B. C.

"I could not dream of dispensing with the services of so eminently valuable a slave. No," Keaton grinned, reading our thoughts, "you need not imagine that your vessel will get away. To-night you are going to send a message to your captain to bring her into my harbour. I'll provide him with a pilot. I shall welcome some English slaves, and the boat will come in handy."

He broke off for a moment as we approached the house.

"Well, here we are back at the palace. I have now only to show you some of the more interesting features of my laboratory, and then you will make your choice—both for yourself and your friend. Either you stay here as my assistants—you see how highly I honour you—or you will be injected with the serum and spend a couple of busy years in the mines, until your strength decays, your face becomes a living ulcer, your teeth drop out, and you become a discard like the others."

WE re-entered the throne-room with its medley of savage pomp and scientific paraphernalia. Something rather more human came into the man's eyes as, with a professional pride, he began to display his work to Hawkes. As for my friend, he was soon absorbed in the things he was shown. I think that for a moment he forgot our peril and the horrors of the place and fancied himself back at Cambridge.

"You see this," said Keaton. "This is my own method for preparing the pure metallic lithium that I need for the manufacture of my salt." The boastful strain broke out again. "What white man has ever thought of such a thing as that ?" he blustered.

"Blumenthal, for one," murmured A. B. C., so softly that only I heard him.

"And this," the negro continued, picking up a little bottle of needle-shaped white crystals, "is the salt. Your white dope-takers would give much to have the secret of it. But it is not as good as the serum. Why, I take that myself."

"You take it ?" I exclaimed.

"Certainly," he said, "properly diluted and not too often. I need something about once a week in the way of a pick-me-up, to use the cultured terms of England. I never touch alcohol or drugs, now that I have perfected the serum. It is safer, and its effect more lasting. But it has to be very weak for my personal use. I use it at three per cent. strength for my good servants ; but for myself at only one-tenth per cent., diluting it, of course, with normal saline. But perhaps I bore you with these personal details ?"

He laughed and said he would show us something more interesting—the action of the serum on the blood.

"Hawkes, may I trouble you for a drop of clean blood ?"

He handed him a small penknife.

My friend, apparently judging it wise to humour him, made a tiny incision in his own finger and squeezed a generous supply of blood on to the slide the negro offered him.

Keaton took back the knife, and, stopping before a microscope and taking a small serum bottle and another slide, began to search for something among the instruments on his table.

"Ah, here's a platinum wire," he said, picking up one that lay among the dust and *débris* on the benches.

"Good heavens, man," cried A. B. C., "you're not going to use that filthy wire to show *me* an experiment, are you?"

For a moment the negro seemed, as it were, to relapse into his one-time *rôle* of student. Almost quietly he said: "Oh, very well, I'll use a syringe."

He pulled open a drawer, and, extracting a hypodermic syringe, which he quickly steri ized in a flame, he charged it full with the concentrated serum and squeezed a drop from it on the slide. He busied himself with the slides, bragging of the expertness with which he carried out the technical preparations, and placed one of them under the microscope, focused the instrument roughly, and called Hawkes's attention to certain features which appeared to impress my friend profoundly.

"AND now," said Keaton, when they had looked in turn for some minutes, "we must wait for a quarter of an hour or so for the effect to develop. Meanwhile I shall show you what happens to the blood immediately after inoculation. I shall not ask you to be the subject of this experiment—I do not want to agitate you unduly—but will myself condescend. The test is very delicate, and shows quite well with even the very dilute serum which I myself use."

He produced another serum bottle with the usual lid of thin rubber, and picked up the syringe again. He thrust the needle abruptly through the top of the bottle, depressed the piston, and drew it up again, thus charging the syringe.

A. B. C. opened his mouth to speak.

"But——" he said.

"Wait, wait, white man," snapped the negro. "Silence! The emperor is taking refreshment!"

He plunged the needle into his forearm and pressed down the piston.

My heart sank as I watched the gloating absorption with which he performed the injection. His eagerness was like that of a drug-fiend abandoning himself to his vice. And we were at his mercy!

Then, just as I was giving way to despair, a miracle happened.

Keaton whirled round with a grunt. His face had turned the greasy ashen hue peculiar to the terrified negro.

"Something's wrong!" he cried.

His great chest heaved and shook to the hammering of his heart, which I could actually hear beating at a prodigious rate. The veins stood out on his forehead, and sweat poured down his face.

"Something's wrong with the serum!" he cried again. "Hawkes, you devil, what have you done?"

At the first sign of his agitation, immediately after the withdrawal of the syringe, Hawkes had pulled me back into a corner of the room. It was well he did so, for with a rapidity which I have never seen equalled Keaton flung himself at us.

It was the movement of a galvanized frog, a spontaneous jerk quicker than any blow ever delivered by the swiftest boxer. It brought the negro's thigh against a corner of the table so violently that I think the bone must have broken. The massive table was thrown right over, and in all probability this alone saved our lives.

Thrown to the floor by the impact, he was seized by convulsions that seemed physically impossible. Drawing tremendous breaths, but neither speaking nor groaning, he writhed about the floor like a broken snake, grasping and shattering all he touched.

Suddenly the end came. Throwing back his head and his heels with such violence that he was flung into the air, he fell with his head on an iron anvil and lay still. His heart ceased its beating and a strange silence reigned.

"Is he dead?" I gasped. "How did you kill him?"

"He's dead all right," said A. B. C., who had completely regained his composure, "but I had nothing to do with it. His own beastly untidy methods were responsible. Don't you remember that, when I stopped his using that filthy platinum wire, he used his own syringe, filling it full and merely putting a single drop on the slide? When he picked it up again he had evidently forgotten—as you had—that it was almost full of the undiluted serum. Jabbing it in this bottle of weak stuff and pressing down the piston, he discharged its contents into his own private supply, so that the dose he took must have been almost a third of the full strength, instead of his usual thousandth.

"You heard me try to stop him, but he shouted at me to be silent. No wonder his system couldn't stand it. The stuff *is* effective, evidently. But, man alive, I don't want to lecture on physiology now; I want to get away before the guards find us."

His plan was quickly made. He strode to a corner of the laboratory where a long switchboard stood, rapidly inspected a plan on the wall beside it, and pulled down two of the switches.

"Be quick now, my good Johnstone," he cried; "get all those tins over here—you see them? Put them on this table and open them."

He seized one of the native drums that stood beside the throne and ripped off the top.

"When water gets into sodium," he

murmured while we worked, "it produces a huge conflagration and explosion, as even you probably know. I'm going to make a few very small holes in the bottom of this drum, fill it with these open tins of sodium, and float it on the stream that runs behind the house. If I've judged the current right, in about four or five minutes the drum will be a quarter of a mile away, and by that time the water will have leaked in sufficiently to start the show. There, it's ready. Go and launch it carefully."

He snatched up a test-tube and a bottle and busied himself with them, while I carried the drum to a door at the back, which, unlike those of the throne-room, was unguarded. I lowered it carefully into the stream, and it was rapidly carried away.

With a rapidity which I have never seen equalled, Keaton flung himself at us. The massive table was thrown right over, and in all probability this alone saved our lives.

Then A. B. C. joined me, and we plunged across the moat and fled into the shelter of the forest. Making a wide *détour* of the house, we soon came in sight of the road to the sea. We dared not emerge upon it, and we had to pound along through the trees, every sense strained to avoid giving an alarm.

"What's wrong with the sodium?" I heard A. B. C. mutter as the minutes went by and nothing happened.

Even as he spoke, there came the dull sound of an explosion, and a flame shot up far away on the other side of the forest. The bits of sodium, thrown on every side, must have met more moisture, for the first explosion was succeeded by numerous smaller ones.

"If that doesn't draw the guards away from the cliffs, nothing will," said Hawkes.

Suddenly a red-uniformed negro blundered upon us. He was hastening towards the uproar, but the moment he saw us he gave a cry of surprise and levelled his rifle. I saw that it was the man who had captured us by the fence.

Just as he was about to shoot, Hawkes drew a gleaming object from his pocket and, with a swift underhand motion, threw it at the man. It struck him on the forehead, for all that he was several paces distant, and a liquid poured down his face and clothes. He screamed, dropped his rifle, and fell to the ground, tearing at his head.

A. B. C. pulled me sharply away to the left and we rushed on. In a few minutes we reached the end of the forest. It was near the place where the prisoners had been mending the fence, and we could see the new wire glittering in the sun. There was

no one there. Their work finished, they must have been shepherded away to other tasks.

But we were trapped! We could not hope to jump the charged fence.

"We're done for," I said, and began to picture our fate at the hands of the negroes.

"Come on, you fool!" cried A. B. C., and rushed to the wire.

I expected to see him killed by the current, but, to my amazement, he clambered through unscathed and motioned me to follow.

"Didn't you see me switch this section off before we left?" he laughed. "You don't think I forgot it, do you, you innocent?"

We scrambled down to the launch, switched on the engine, and backed out to sea. We were scarcely clear when a negro appeared on top of the cliff and fired at us, but A. B. C. put the helm over and the shot missed.

The *Dædalus* had observed our plight, for we saw them lower the rope ladder and could hear the engines beginning to revolve. I saw the captain run to the bridge with a rifle. There was a shot; and the negro on the cliff jumped into the air and fell, his uniform bright upon the white ground. A number of his fellows took his place, and bullets splashed up the water near us. But by good luck we reached the yacht in safety.

"The sooner we get to Algiers and have this place cleaned up the better," remarked A. B. C., as we set off swiftly eastward.

"What was it you threw at that guard?" I asked him.

"Oh, just ammonia," he said. "I found some in the house. If they haven't pulled him clear, he's probably asphyxiated by now. Serves him right, anyway. As for the deceased Keaton, I hope, Johnstone, his sad end will be a warning to untidy scientists!"

GHILCHIK—
the newest laugh-maker

THE path to popularity is an uphill one, but few humorous artists have climbed it with greater rapidity than Mr. D. L. Ghilchik. Two years ago he was practically unknown. To-day his work constitutes a regular feature in more than one of our leading humorous journals. Undoubtedly his rapid rise to fame may be attributed to his remarkable fertility in ideas, aided by a distinctive style of drawing which enables his admirers to recognize his pictures without bothering to read the signature.

Ghilchik is a Roumanian by birth, an artist by inclination, and a humorist by accident. He started out to become one of those genuine poor-but-honest art-for-art's-sake painters (even now he has an air of Bohemianism obviously acquired in the Latin *ateliers*), but the chance discovery of a comical "kink" has now reshaped his whole career—not to mention his bank balance.

In the course of a recent interesting chat with him the writer gleaned the information that he came to England at the age of five, was educated in this country (there is certainly no trace of foreign accent in his speech), and revealed a talent for drawing at an early age. One of his youthful efforts still exists in a dog-eared exercise book, upon one page of which is a drawing, originally intended as a diagram to illustrate a chemical experiment, but subsequently elaborated to include portraits of the experimenters, with the Science Master standing in the background. Across the foot of the page, written in red ink with a pedagogic hand, is the comment: "Excellent — but not chemistry!"

First Ex-Knut: "Wouldn't care to be in Blighty now, Reg, when it's rotten form to go in for fancy teas and that—what?"
Second Ex-Knut: "Honk!"

(This was Mr. Ghilchik's first accepted drawing.)

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It is not surprising to learn that the youthful perpetrator of this artistic irrelevancy, upon leaving school, begged to be allowed to study art seriously, and after some demur on the part of his father—who wanted him to be a doctor—was sent to Italy to learn to draw and paint.

After much valuable experience in various Continental art schools, followed by further studies in London and Manchester

FORCE OF HABIT.
Ex-Policeman Visits the Jungle.
By permission of "London Opinion."

(where, by the way, he met the lady who is now Mrs. Ghilchik), he settled down to earn his living by painting portraits.

"In those days," he told me, with a laugh, "I thought I was no end of a fine little fellow. I was 'of the arts, arty,' and I used to dress the part too. Of course, even then I had a sense of humour—you could have guessed as much from some of the ties I wore!—though I never dreamed that I should capitalize it by turning my hand to comic drawings."

"How did the change come about, then?" I asked.

"Indirectly it was due to the War. I joined up in the ranks of the British Army, but when it was discovered that I was a bit of a linguist—I speak Italian, French, and German—they gave me a job in the Intelligence Service. They sent me out

A LONG-FELT WANT IN THE BALLROOM.
The Patent Arm-Extension for Short Dancers.
By permission of "London Opinion."

REPRISAL.
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

on spy-hunting expeditions, for which I had to adopt all kinds of strange disguises and visit the most queer places. It was a thrilling job, of the kind that Sherlock Holmes himself might have enjoyed. However, that has nothing to do with comic art.

"Upon one of the letters which I wrote to my wife whilst in France I happened to draw a little sketch, which apparently caused so much amusement at home that I was encouraged to elaborate it with a view to submitting it for publication. With the 'fair copy' that I made for this purpose I sent my wife a list of the humorous journals to which it might be offered, starting with *Punch* and working down the scale to one of the 'halfpenny comics.' To my surprise and delight *Punch* accepted it. Thus encouraged,

"Pardon me, but may I offer you a lift——

"——er—er—as far as that corner?"

SECOND THOUGHTS.

By permission of "The Humorist."

Hotel Clerk: "A double-bedded room, sir? But we gathered from your instructions you were coming alone."

Young Exquisite: "I am alone. But I find that a single bed isn't quite wide enough to pwess my twousahs."

By permission of "The Humorist."

I tried again, and met with further success—with the result that, as soon as the War was over, I decided to devote part of my time to producing a certain amount of humorous work.

"At first I found it rather difficult to work up ideas, but after a while I trained my brain to evolve them, almost automatically, from little incidents in everyday life. Nowadays I have more ideas than I have time to carry out, so I jot them down in this little book as soon as they occur to me. One of these days I shall

probably lose the book—which will be the funniest joke of all!

"Friends—known and unknown—are always eager to supply me with ideas for funny drawings, most of which, I regret, are quite useless. Not long ago I received a letter from a man who undertook to supply me, for a consideration, with a dozen or more jokes weekly. He enclosed a few specimens of his 'original' ideas just to show what he could do. As I had already seen all of them published, and three of them happened to be my own, I decided not to avail myself of his services.

"Even humorous drawing has its serious side. I believe that careful workmanship is just as essential in a funny picture as in a 'straight' one. And I take any amount of trouble to get my backgrounds correct. For instance, for that riverside picture I made five different rough sketches in various parts of the Thames before I found a setting that was to my liking. I am just as fussy over simple interior scenes, and although I have a little den in which to work, I spread myself all over the house, sketching a window here, a door there, and a fireplace somewhere else. I am a perfect nuisance in the house."

FALSE ALARM.

"Good gracious—the bishop!" "Oh, I see."

By permission of "London Opinion."

Cottager: "Reuben, the gen'l'man wants a noo-laid egg to 'is tea. I'll just slip round to the stores while you go in the yard and cluck."

By permission of "The Humorist."

Very hairy customer: Haircut, singe, shampoo, moustache clipped, and beard trimmed, please. Er—where can I put this cigar down?"

Barber: "Would you mind keeping it in your mouth for a time, sir? It'll be a sort of landmark to give me my bearings."

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Ghilchik: the Newest Laugh-Maker

Tripper: "Aren't you anxious about mishaps with inexperienced folk taking your boats up-river?"
Boatman: "Lor' no, miss. An overturned boat generally comes back to us with the tide."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

would fetch a policeman!

"Most of my amateur models insist upon being allowed to see what I have drawn, and since my impressions of them are not always exactly complimentary, I have to be very careful. Indeed, upon more than one occasion I have deceitfully disguised my real intention by drawing a particularly flattering portrait of a model before commencing work on the comic study.

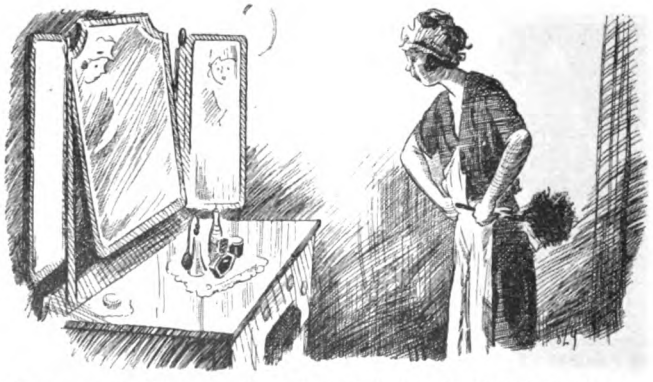
"And do you draw your figures from models?" I asked.

"Nearly always. I pick them up in all sorts of strange places and bribe them to come to my studio and pose. Strangely enough, on several occasions when I have run across particularly striking 'types' suitable for humorous drawings and asked them to pose for me, I have met with the reply: 'Oh yes—I know what you wants. A gentleman named Mr. Belcher done my portrait a long time ago.'

"One dear old lady to whom I diffidently suggested that she might care to pose for me, replied with wrathful indignation that she had never descended to such indecency and never would—and if I didn't look out she

"Mummy, which frock will I wear for the party?"
"I don't know, dear—I must see which is the cleanest."
"Will you find out now, mummy, 'cos I want to know whether to wash for a square neck or a round one?"

By permission of "The Humorist."



New servant (tidying up her mistress's bedroom): "Well, of all the barmy places to keep the cruet!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

"One old girl who poses for me occasionally when she is not busy 'doing a bit of charring,' as she calls it, was overheard to remark to a friend recently, with all the coyness of her seventy summers: 'That Mr. Ghilchik is always drawing my picture—though what he sees in me I really don't know.'

"Perhaps it's as well that she doesn't!"

THE SHORT CUT

By

AUSTIN PHILIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

I.

"WELL, good-bye, Barbara!"

"Good-bye, father, darling. You'll be back again on Thursday?"

"I hope so. Look after that set of rollers carefully, Fernie. It's just as well our rascally friend is jailed, I think!"

Douglas Carmichael waved his hand finally; and the big car began its ten-mile dash to the station while his daughter and his second-in-command, Lawrence Fernie, having watched him pass out of sight, started to walk towards the factory along a path between the waist-high tea-bushes. On either hand Tamil coolies, hatless and with hair strained back and bun-like, were plucking sedulously and dexterously and depositing the fragrant green leaves within well-like, back-slung wicker baskets.

Outside the great building, on whose red corrugated roof the early sun was shining warmly, the couple paused and looked at one another.

"I must go in and get to work now!" said the young man, seemingly regretful.

"But you're coming to us for breakfast?"

"Thank you very much. Will your brother be at home?"

"Yes—but he's going to the Aitchesons just afterwards!"

"I'm glad of that—awfully. I've been waiting to get a chance of a real talk with you!"

Lawrence Fernie passed in under the eucalyptus trees; and Barbara Carmichael walked back slowly to the bungalow which her father occupied as manager of this large up-country tea-estate.

Having reached the house she sat down in the veranda, her heart beating fast and almost desperately.

It was coming—coming most certainly, after that last tennis-meet, dance, and drive home together; Lawrence was going to ask her to marry him—Lawrence, the man of whom her father thought so highly, who was the finest all-round athlete in the island, who had shown such ready bravery the other day when a half-mad coolie incendiary had tried to smash certain of the machinery by thrusting an iron bar between the rollers which twist the green leaf and break the cells which give the future beverage colour and flavour. Nine-tenths of the girls in the island—and too many of the married women—would have given their eyes to own Lawrence Fernie. And he was going to be hers. He had come to this estate, had seen her and had been conquered—although she was barely one-and-twenty. How it had happened was a miracle to her. But he was her scalp very certainly—and those who were most capable of judging her might have told her that she had won him because she was one of those too rare women who unconsciously exercise fascination by habitually giving rather than taking—giving of their best and generous selves.

Barbara was snatched from her reverie. The appu had appeared, bringing the tappal bag. She unlocked it and separated its contents.

Her personal letters were three only. Two of them were invitations. The third was from a friend at Colombo.

"*Dear old B.* (ran part of it),—

"*I have been thinking such heaps and heaps about you, this last day or two. Monica has told me all about you and Lawrence Fernie up at that tennis-meet, and the tremendous fuss he was making of you.*

"*How is Lawrence? He's rather a pet, isn't he? Are you very badly scalped?*

"*I know you'll have fallen down and worshipped him. But do take care, my dear! He's been engaged at least half-a-dozen times already—so don't go taking him too seriously!*"

Barbara read the letter several times—and on each separate occasion her face grew definitely hotter. For apart from her extreme generous-heartedness (indeed, it was that quality's natural complement) pride was the dominating note in her character. Young, relatively inexperienced—for it was

not yet three years since she had come back to Ceylon from Cheltenham—she began to dread lest she had made herself cheap.

As she sat there, her brother approached. Francis Carmichael was a cripple and must always remain one. Now just fourteen, he had been dropped by a careless ayah as a child and had never been able to go home to school, but had had tutors, and hoped to become a painter. A touch mischievous, more than a little self-centred, he nevertheless worshipped Lawrence Fernie as only, sometimes, those to whom athletics are impossible admire the man who most excels at them.

"What's the matter, 'B'?" he asked with the quick intuition of the invalid. "You look upset! Worrying about Lawrence?"

"Lawrence!"

"Yes—of course you're in love with him. All the girls I meet seem to be. And I don't wonder. By Jove, wasn't that plucky, the way he handled that coolie yesterday!"

Barbara answered nothing. But once more her pride was hurt most horribly. For straws show how the wind blows; and Francis then, also, as well as Kathleen Cuthbertson, seemed to think that she had made herself cheap.

THE gong was sounded for midday breakfast, and the brother and sister went into the dining-room.

A few minutes later Fernie entered.

"I'm sorry I'm late!" he apologized. "But the leaf grows so fast in this March sun, and I've had extra trouble at the factory!"

"Seeing to the damaged rollers?" Barbara did her uttermost to make her troubled voice sound steady.

"Yes—and they *were* damaged! I think I've got them right now, though, and saved the cost of a specialist!"

"What do you suppose they'll give the fellow who tried to wreck them?"

"I can't say, Francis. But it will be a pretty stiff stretch, for certain. You see, he's an escaped convict from the Andamans and got to us with faked credentials—and I understand he knifed a man in Southern India!"

"The same as he tried to do you!"

"Yes, but I say, let's talk about something more interesting, Frank, old man!"

Lawrence Fernie changed the subject to cricket—which Francis would spend all day watching. Barbara spoke little, but sat looking at Lawrence, worried, anxious, and unhappy—torn by love, pride, and inexperience. Now and then it seemed to her that Francis divined she was perturbed—and was amused at it. The knowledge came again, to stab her, that the boy believed she adored slavishly the young athlete whom he so worshipped himself.

The meal ended. Her brother drifted away presently. A moment later Barbara

Carmichael—faced with the very crisis of her life—found herself on the veranda beside Lawrence.

"Barbara," she heard him begin after a couple of minutes' silence which had racked her. "You know I am very fond of you—you *must* know, after our drive home together from that tennis-meet, what is the state of my feelings towards you. There is no one like you in the island. You are absolutely the first girl I have cared about in this way—I mean, so desperately seriously. Will you be engaged to me? I'm not a pauper—and your father, I think, thinks well of me, and I shall be managing an estate on my own presently!"

"Barbara, you are absolutely the first girl I have cared about in this way."

He had spoken very quietly and—as a more experienced woman might have thought—very earnestly. But Barbara had no experience, no mother, no sister to confide in; and though she adored him even more blindly perhaps than her brother imagined, she would have died rather than have seemed an easy conquest which would make him think less of her later. And then—as if she had no volition and as if pride had assumed complete command and had put the very words into her mouth—she made reply in a voice which to her own ears sounded most strange and wholly alien.

"Thank you very much, Lawrence. I am of course extraordinarily flattered. But I am not very old yet—and I don't think I at all want to settle or to tie myself at present—and besides, I don't care for you sufficiently!"

She ended almost sharply—as people who are saying precisely the opposite of what they mean and feel so very often do speak sharply. Lawrence Fernie sat looking at her, as it certainly seemed, in amazement; and then something came into his face which assuredly must have been latent and which Barbara recognized intuitively. It was pride—no lesser than her own pride; pride, which dictated the answer which he made now, and the movement which so speedily followed afterwards.

"I am so sorry I misunderstood you. But I shall not repeat my suggestion or be in any way importunate. As I am bound to see you on and off, owing to my work here, please try to forget—as I shall try to forget—that I ever suggested our engagement."

He had gone five seconds later. Barbara—too proud to detain him or to withdraw her definite statement that she did not care for him—indeed it would have made her look contemptible—sat on with head bent forward and fingers clasped in front of her, till suddenly a big splash fell upon them. Another one followed. Then sobs began to shake

her ; and feeling that she had been a fool or fools and had ruined her own happiness for ever, she ran round the veranda and in at a window and flung herself, face downward, on her bed.

II.

"GOOD morning!" said the District Medical Officer, coming out of the Estate Hospital. "Your father not back yet, Miss Carmichael?"

"No, doctor. He's kept busy down at Colombo with company meetings!"

"Glad of the change, I expect. Didn't you have a bit of a bust-up here the other day with one of the coolies?"

"Yes, but that's all over—and the man's in prison. Can't I give you a peg now?"

"Thanks, but I'm afraid I can't stop for it. Good-bye, Francis, my boy. Good-bye, Miss Carmichael. Strikes me you're not looking as bonny as usual. Shall I send you over a tonic?"

Barbara shook her head with a smile that was found—and forced—with difficulty. The excellent medical man, half-convinced only, shot a searching glance at his young hostess, then raised his hat, nodded to her brother, and drove off rapidly to his headquarters.

"Coming back to the house?" asked Francis, a moment later.

"No, I'm going for a bit of a wander!"

Barbara turned away. As she did so, Lawrence Fernie came along with the estate "burgher" dispenser who was making his way to the hospital. Barbara trembled—almost, as she feared, very visibly. The young man's lips whitened—surely with pride and with resentment. Saluting her very formally and without speaking a syllable, he set himself into step with Francis and walked towards the factory with the boy.

Barbara ached to look back, to go back, to apologize, to explain everything—but it was impossible, utterly impossible; and even though she could so humble herself, it was all too probable that Lawrence, full of righteous indignation, would treat her coldly and indifferently. Wretched and heart-wrung, she wandered blindly on through the estate to the very utmost edge of the jungle.

Then, retracing her steps, she took a path amid the tea-bushes where women and older children were plucking busily; for it was Spring and the growths were very active.

As the baskets became full they were carried to a wooden shed where a young public schoolboy from England—who shared the Sine-Dorai's bungalow with Lawrence—would duly take record of them and give them their pluckers' tallies to be redeemed for money on pay-day. A small flight of steps led to a platform where an immense sack hung from a wire which—supported by standards like telegraph poles—would carry the sack, when filled, from this high ground to the factory in the valley—as the crow flew, a distance of a mile.

The young assistant was temporarily absent, superintending some men engaged in drain-cutting. Barbara, as was sometimes her habit, mounted the platform that she might survey from this point of vantage the whole estate, bungalows and cantonments.

Instinctively her eye travelled to the bungalow of the Sine-Dorai (or assistant-manager), and her heart grew sadder at the sight of it, and misery gripped her yet more masterfully.

Then suddenly the telephone shrilled—the telephone which announced the receipt at the factory, or the despatch from this platform, of the immense wire-hung sack with fresh leaves in it. The shed being empty she picked up the receiver, and her heart leaped from dullness into pounding and then seemed to stop from sheer terror.

For her brother, Francis, was speaking; and his voice was agitated and fear-haunted.

"Barbara, is that you?" had come his question. "I saw you on the platform, through father's glasses."

"Yes, it's I, all right!"

"Where's Cullen?" Cullen was Lawrence's young assistant.

"I don't know. Probably looking after the drain-cutting."

"My God! Barbara, it's touch and go here! You know that coolie?"

"The one who harmed the machinery?"

"Yes, and who tried to murder Lawrence. Well, he's escaped from prison!"

"Escaped!"

"Yes, he's here now, in the factory, with a knife—and he means murder—nothing less than murder. He saw me first, and I got into Cullen's room and locked the door on him—and now he's hunting for Lawrence!"

"In the factory?"

"Yes, but I think Lawrence is outside somewhere. The fellow hasn't seen him. But when Lawrence comes in, he'll walk right straight into the man. I'd go and look for him and warn him—but it would be altogether useless. I'm no match in strength for the nigger, and I haven't got any sort of weapon with me."

Barbara stood a moment or two quite motionless, numbed mentally, paralysed and incapable of any action.

Then the springs of thought seemed released again, and her brain started working

most furiously. She had very great natural resource—though her life had been too easy to develop it. Now necessity was at hand; and it drove her to think rapidly and clearly.

She must at all costs get warning to Lawrence. But how—since he was somewhere near the factory, yet not present there, and was out of reach of the telephone? Risk all and run to him? Ah, what use would that be? Although by the overhead wire from the platform where she stood was a mile only as the crow flew, she was not less than three miles away by the circuitous and hilly path by which she had been wandering through the tea-fields. Half an hour was the minimum she could return in—and by that time Lawrence would be murdered.

THEN a plan came to her—three-parts born of the "association of ideas," doubtless; for she had been reading "Monte Cristo," and the escape of Edmond Dantès was at that moment fresh in her memory. The sack, the wire, the swift descent across the plantations and the valley! She glanced round, saw and snatched what she wanted—a pruning-knife—leaped into the great sack whose mouth was held open by an iron hoop, released a catch, and in another second was descending at a speed which was increasing terrifically.

She could see absolutely nothing. She could only feel the frightful oscillation and hear the strident screeching of the imperfectly-oiled wheel on the wire above her, for the sack was six feet deep.

With a swift, circular cutting movement she made a large eyelet hole in the side—and then could see the bushes beneath, at moments coming up almost to meet her and then again temporarily receding while a sensation as of sea-sickness took hold of her.

And still the frightful pace grew faster; and her brain worked more quickly to keep pace with it.

She remembered the arrival-place and despaired suddenly.

For down at the factory the sack would slide in at an opening and come to rest against the scaffolding of another platform on which (at such times as this means of transit was in full work) a man would be telephoned to to receive it and to tip it down into a big, well-like room—the place of the preliminary drying. But the sack always struck the scaffolding as a buffer is struck, as it must strike now, most certainly; for Barbara Carmichael was by no means a featherweight.

Death—or mutilation—lay ahead of her before she could save the man for whose sake she had dared everything, uncountingly, in obedience to that omnipotent power, the love-impulse. Through the cut in the side she saw the factory flashing closer. The sack slowed down now automatically—slowed down considerably; though, alas, nothing could make it slow down completely or prevent that impact upon the scaffolding.

She stooped, swiftly, with a genius born of terror and hacked at the bottom of the sack with the pruning-knife; and a gap gaped, rapidly widening. When it was large enough for her intention she put the knife between her strong young teeth, gripped at the canvas sides of her vehicle for momentary security, then felt the thing change direction as it passed round the factory wall and in at the opening. The scaffolding was barely three yards away when she dropped down, stone-like, through the slashed opening. An instant later, breathless and shaken but uninjured, she was lying on a great heap of drying leaves brought there that morning as she had but now been brought, and ample in depth and softness and consistency to break her accurately-timed fall.

She lay for a second or two, recovering. Then she reached forward for the knife which had escaped her, retrieved it, plunged her way out from among the leaves, half overcome by their aroma, reached some wooden steps which led up from the well-like room to the level of the platform-landing, and then flashed swiftly through the factory.

She passed hot-foot along corridors where amazed Tamils stared at her, reached her father's private room and rushed to his table, fully aware of what he kept there. Before leaving for Colombo he had given her his bunch of keys, which she had placed with her own on her châtelaine, and from a drawer of his desk she took an automatic pistol which she knew to be already fully loaded. Then she rushed back into the corridor—and saw a man approaching, right ahead of her.

It was Lawrence.

At the sight of him Barbara so trembled with relief and reaction that her voice faltered and died away almost, while a divine-like sensation of protectiveness and tenderness instantly invaded all her being.

"You're safe, then!" she faltered. "I'm not too late!"

"Too late?" The words came wonderingly, and his bewildered glance rested on her soiled jumper, soiled hands, dishevelled hair, and eyes which shone in her now haggard young face like lamps of love and happiness.

"Yes—you don't know, of course. That man has escaped from prison!"

"The wrecker of the machinery!"

She put the knife between her strong young teeth, and then dropped down, stone-like, through the slashed opening.

"Yes, the one who tried to stab you. Francis saw him searching for you. The coolie chased him, but my brother got into Arthur Cullen's room and locked himself in and 'phoned to me. He said you were not in the building!"

"Quite right—I wasn't. I've only come back just this second!"

"Then where is the coolie?"

"I haven't seen him. Give me that pistol and get behind me!"

Barbara obeyed. They began to walk cautiously along the corridor and came presently to Lawrence's own room—which was empty.

"Lock yourself in here!" she heard him order. "Leave me to deal with the devil!"

Barbara shook her head decisively, wholly determined not to leave him. Then—partly out of genuine anxiety, and partly to prevent him from insisting—she burst out eagerly:—

"Oughtn't we to go and look for Francis? The man may have forced that door or——"

"Yes, of course. You mustn't come. Oh, well, I can't possibly stop to argue!"

Lawrence Fernie hurried down the corridor. Outside Cullen's room he put eye and ear to the keyhole. He could neither see nor hear anything. A new terror seized Francis's sister.

"He isn't—oh, Lawrence, it can't be possible that the man has got in and stabbed him!"

For answer, Fernie turned the handle rapidly and set his whole considerable weight against the door with the obvious intention of forcing it.

An instant later Barbara saw him lying in the room—for the unlocked door had offered no resistance—having fallen prostrate with the force of his own impetus.

Then she uttered a cry which marked her greatest shock of all that last terrific, crowded ten minutes of shocks—and darted forward, just as Lawrence recovered himself.

Side by side with the Sine-Dorai she stood staring in the direction of the window.

On a big table were a boy's feet and a glass of sherbet; and in the chair before it her brother, Francis, was reclining, holding a novel.

Leisuredly he looked at them—glancing first at Fernie, and then smiling wickedly at Barbara.

"So I did bluff you, 'B'!" she heard him say, ecstatically. "But how the dickens you got here so quickly altogether beats me, old girl. May I politely remind you that to-day's the first of April? Fernie, I put it to you impartially. Isn't she a number-one-sized fool!"

For a second or two there was absolute silence. Then the mischievous—and rather malicious—boy who had so played on his sister's rightly-guessed feeling for the Sine-Dorai, perceived in Lawrence's eye a certain something which warned him that his skin was in danger—even though he was a cripple. He got up, came forward, dodged, feinted, and then found the corridor while Lawrence, wrapped up in Barbara, did not trouble to pursue.

"By God! The young devil! He must have frightened you out of your wits—and I don't mind owning I was afraid myself, for that nigger is a pretty rotten customer. I do hope it hasn't shaken you. Where were you when Frank telephoned?"

"Up at the tally shed!"

"How long ago was that?"

"I suppose—at the outside—ten minutes!"

"Ten minutes! But how on earth have you got here?"

Barbara began to explain to him. Her hearer paled as he listened. And she saw him look at her now as—without her being aware of it—she had looked at him when first she saw him in the corridor.

"But you risked your life—madly!" she heard him pant, presently.

"I suppose I did, Lawrence!"

"And to save *me!*"

THERE was a considerable interval of silence. Each stood looking at the other; and great gratitude was visible in the man's eyes—and also great love and tenderness; while in the eyes of the girl were apparent all those things which she felt so truly and so deeply and which were an essential part of her whole being.

Strong and deep-felt thought must ultimately find outlet in firm action. It was the man who was the first to make a movement.

"But Barbara!" he cried, pride forgotten utterly, coming forward and taking her in his arms and crushing her to him. "Barbara! Dear old Barbara!"

Their lips met now, and clung and met and clung again yet many times. When at last she was given respite, Barbara drew back a little and considered him; and—her pride, no less than his, become as nothing before love which had eclipsed it—she smilingly whispered this question:—

"Lawrence, darling. Won't you ask me a second time if I'll marry you? Because I'm so longing to say 'yes'!"

MR. BILLINGHAM, THE MARQUIS AND MADELON.—No. 8.

The Salvation of Mr. Norton

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBEY

EVEN the serious business of losing money gracefully was suspended for a moment or two when Validia, followed by her latest cavalier, emerged from the baccarat room and leaned over the roulette table. All heads were turned. There was a little whisper of half-reluctant admiration. Validia had been the acknowledged beauty of Monte Carlo for several weeks.

"Give me a mille or two," she demanded, turning to her companion with a careless gesture.

He produced a substantial-looking pocket-book, deliberately extracted two mille notes, and gave them to her. She passed them a little contemptuously to the croupier.

"*Maximum au zéro et les chevaux*," she directed. "*La monnaie en plaques*."

The ball was spun. One of the numbers at the lower end of the table turned up. Validia swept the plaques into her bag and turned away.

"I do not know why I play this game!" she exclaimed, angrily. "I always lose. Let us try the other table."

Her cavalier followed her, silent, with an obedience which was a little dog-like and British. Validia was beautiful in the type which pleased most at the moment, with oval face, ivory-tinted complexion, and black hair, smooth and glossy, brushed back and ending in almost a chignon. Her only jewellery was a rope of wonderful pearls. She walked alluringly. Her dark brown eyes, a little narrow, it is true, but very wonderful, held in them a light which many a man had known to his cost. Her lips were so provocative, at times so inviting, that one failed to notice their wickedness. She had come to Monte Carlo two seasons before in the Russian Ballet, unknown and without particular genius. She had abandoned dancing now and her jewels and toilettes were each month more gorgeous. She had given colour to a report, and liked it to be understood, that she was secretly married to a somewhat disreputable but wealthy member of a Royal House. She spoke of her secret in the strictest confidence to everyone. It eased somewhat the strain of a position which she herself once naively remarked "might be open to misconception."

She approached the farther of the three roulette tables and once more extended her hand to her companion, this time without looking at him.

"A mille," she said.

The man by her side—very English, a little pompous, distinctly middle class—hesitated.

"You have those plaques," he reminded her.

She turned her head ever so slightly and his fingers went shivering for his pocket-book. He handed her the note, which she took without a word of thanks. Again she staked, and again she lost. She thrust the plaques which came to her as change into her bag. Then she turned towards the door.

"I think I will drink something," she decided. "You shall take me to the bar, *mon ami*. That man Kretterson is a pig

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to-night. He will not give up the bank for an hour."

"Why do you like so much to gamble?" he asked. "Why must it be baccarat? They tell me there is no game where you can lose so much."

She laughed quietly and tapped his hand with her little ivory fan.

"I do not often lose," she said.

MADELON, seated with Mr. Billingham in a remote corner of the bar, leaned over suddenly and laid her hand upon his arm.

"My friend," she exclaimed, "I will tell you what it is which makes this place seem so satisfying to us—which makes us loath to leave. Underneath all its tinsel and theatricality there is real life to be seen here—human everyday life."

"I guess we've seen a few strange things this season," Mr. Billingham acquiesced.

"I do not mean the obvious tragedies," Madelon continued. "I do not mean the suicides, the murders, the naked passions. I mean something nearer to our hearts. I will give you an example. You saw the two who just came in?"

"Sure," Mr. Billingham assented. "The woman Validia—the Russian woman—and the pompous English Johnny who follows her like a shadow."

"Now I want you to look at someone else," Madelon went on, dropping her voice a little. "Do you see that middle-aged, badly-dressed woman who has just changed her seat?"

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"Female hayseed type," he observed. "Looks as though she had been dug up from the back woods and dressed in last year's styles from the department store."

Madelon smiled.

"You are really a very observant person," she murmured. "You see her. She is a study in herself. She was probably considered pretty when she was young. She lived in a small town and her father was perhaps a prosperous but unambitious manufacturer. She has gone comfortably through life and her chief troubles have been her servants and the high price of provisions. Just now she has something else in her face. Can you see it?"

"She looks kinder scared," Mr. Billingham suggested.

"She is living in the shadow of a new and terrible fear," Madelon declared. "Something has happened to her of which she has never dreamed. She has jogged comfortably on through life and now suddenly there is a precipice at her feet. She is the wife of the man who is talking to Validia. He has left her alone all the evening. She has just changed her place so as to be out of sight. Look at her sitting there, with her hands in her lap and her eyes staring through the wall. She is too rustic even to hide her sorrow."

"Who put you wise to all this?" Mr. Billingham demanded, curiously.

"I talked to her yesterday afternoon," Madelon explained. "I could not help it. She looked so lonely. Do you mind if I go and talk to her again now?"

"Why, of course not," Mr. Billingham acquiesced. "Come to look at her closely, she does look as though she'd been put through it. I'll try a hand or two at *trente-et-quarante*."

Madelon crossed the room and sat down by the woman's side.

"You are not gambling this evening," she remarked pleasantly.

"I do not play these games," the woman confessed, a little timidly. "I don't understand them. At home we play auction bridge sometimes, but I am not fond of cards."

"Where do you live?" Madelon inquired.

"At Exeter, in Devonshire," the woman answered. "My husband is manager of the principal bank there."

"Manager?" Madelon repeated. "I thought he was a banker himself."

The woman shook her head.

"It is a big position," she said, "and my husband is very much esteemed in the city. When we married he was just a clerk in the bank with two hundred a year. He has just got on by being steady and industrious. He has a wonderful head for figures, too."

"This must be a great change for you after an English city," Madelon suggested.

The woman shivered. She was keeping her eyes carefully turned away from the farther end of the room.

"It is a horrible place," she declared, with a strange little sob in her throat. "The first day I thought I should like it. The band was playing and the sun was shining, and Henry and I took a little carriage and drove out to Cap Martin, and after dinner at the hotel we got our tickets for the Rooms, and I won a hundred francs. I thought it was quite a wonderful place that first evening!"

"Tell me," Madelon asked—"that is, if you do not think it an impertinent question—is your husband very rich?"

"We are very well off," was the complacent reply. "He gets eight hundred a year now and he has just had a legacy. That is why we are here. We have never been abroad, and he had to take his holiday in February, so we came out here for three weeks. Cook's arranged it all for us. I

thought that I was going to enjoy it so much, and now it all seems terrible."

"You mean because of that woman?" Madelon said, kindly.

"I do not know why I talk to you like this," the woman continued, with a note of desperation in her tone, "but there it is! Henry has gone mad. He will not let me speak to him at night. He doesn't sleep. I wake up and find him with his eyes open, muttering to himself. He spends more money every day than our whole hotel bill on flowers for her. If I speak to him he storms. And," she went on confidentially, "if any of the folks from around us were to get to hear of this—any of his big clients or the bishop—we have all the ecclesiastical business—I can't think what would happen."

"Do you mind my asking you how much this legacy was?" Madelon ventured.

"Ten thousand pounds," the woman confided. "Eight thousand when the duties were paid. We are going to invest it in house property in Exeter and a little cottage down on the South Coast for our summer holidays, but Henry thought he would like to take this trip first."

"How did your husband become acquainted with this woman?" Madelon inquired.

"I don't know," was the helpless reply. "He stood next her one evening whilst she was waiting for a seat at a *chemin de fer* table. If anyone had told me," she continued, "that Henry Norton—the Henry I've been married to for twenty-two years—would behave as he is doing, like a stark raving lunatic, all on account of a half-naked, shameless creature like that, I should have thought that they were crazy. Henry used to go on so at the young girls who wore short skirts in Exeter. He's a churchwarden, and the bishop calls him his right-hand man in the city. And now look at him! If any of the directors of the bank were to see him at this moment, where should we be?"

"Men are very trying creatures," Madelon agreed, soothingly. "Sometimes they break out like this, but it all passes. How long are you staying?"

"For another ten days. How I shall live through them I don't know," Mrs. Norton added, with a little break in her voice. "For a week I have cried myself to sleep, and I go and cry in the afternoons, and now I haven't any tears left. I have nothing but just misery. I try to keep away from here, but what can I do? I only fancy things. I sat in the hotel all last night, in the lounge, and read last week's papers. I sat there until one o'clock, and he hadn't come in. Then I went and walked out on the terrace, where they say people sometimes commit suicide. I never thought of that before, but when one has such a pain——"

Madelon patted her companion's fat hand for a moment.

"You must not be silly," she enjoined. "Listen. I will try to help you. There are ways."

"Henry won't stand being interfered with," his wife sighed.

Madelon nodded understandingly.

"I can quite believe that," she said. "When an obstinate, rather narrow-minded man like your husband gets such an obsession he is hard to deal with. But there is always the woman. I will go and talk to a friend of mine, who is very clever and very fond of helping people in trouble—what you call in English, I think, 'a good sort.'"

Madelon departed with another little nod. On her way out she passed Validia and Mr. Norton, the bank manager from Exeter. Mr. Norton did not appear to be talking much; his attitude was simply one of dogged and deliberate concentration. Validia was gazing at herself in a little mirror. She was looking bored.

"Let us return, my friend, and watch the play," she suggested, putting away her vanity case. "If that hateful man is losing, perhaps he will give me the bank a little earlier. Would you like to be my partner this evening? Well, we shall see!"

She rose to her feet. Her companion immediately followed her example.

"I do not understand the game," he said, hesitatingly, "but if you wish it——"

He followed at her heels; a little self-conscious, a little vain, only failing to be ridiculous because of his intense earnestness. As they crossed the passage, he leaned towards her.

"Must you gamble to-night?" he asked, hoarsely. "Couldn't we go out somewhere—have some supper—talk? I want to talk to you," he went on. "I see nothing of you with all these people. I waited until four o'clock this morning, and then you were too tired."

She laughed, and looked at him with one of those sidelong glances which would have been a revelation to anyone from Exeter.

"Some time," she whispered, "the caprice will seize me. I will take you by the arm. I shall whisper 'Let us go.' Then you will be happy. Just along the passage there—it is not far. You will be glad then that you have waited."

He was a man of imperturbable ways, of stiff and portly demeanour, but little veins stood out upon his forehead and something rose in his throat. Before he could reply they were once more amongst the crowd.

MR. KRETTERSON was winning that evening and showed no desire whatever to relinquish the bank. Validia became fretful and irritable. She was ready to welcome any diversion. She received the bow of the Marquis with marked graciousness. She knew all about him—that he was poor but distinguished. Nevertheless, his notice was always pleasant, and he might well be the medium to other things.

"Madame has not yet had her chance at the baccarat table?" he inquired.

She made a little grimace.

"That man wearies me," she declared. "He wins, and so he persists. After all, why not? I would do the same. The trouble is I desire to play, and I do not like to wait for the things which I desire."

"Why not punt against him?" the Marquis suggested.

"It is a winning bank," she replied; "and, besides, I like the cards myself."

She smiled at him, thinking that, although he, too, was elderly, he was indeed a man of great distinction; contrasting him for a moment in her mind with that dumb, stolid Englishman who stood patiently waiting for her notice. And the Marquis, looking at her perfect face, tracing the curve of her smile, appreciating the little glint of red in the liquid brown of her eyes, fancied himself back again in his younger days. She was indeed a very beautiful woman. Then he remembered his mission.

"I wish, madame," he said, "to ask a favour. I wish to present to you my friend Mr. Billingham from New York. Mr. Billingham is one of those giants who have lifted commerce and money-making into a place amongst the fine arts. He has been an admirer of yours for a long time."

No form of introduction could have been more apt. It gave madame great pleasure to make the acquaintance of Mr. Billingham

"How did your husband become acquainted with this woman?" Madelon inquired. "I don't know," was the helpless reply.

Her pleasure was enhanced when she found that he spoke quite tolerable French. The three talked together, whilst Mr. Henry Norton stood dumbly in the background. Presently, without a word of excuse to her late companion, Validia pointed to an empty seat and motioned Mr. Billingham to accompany her.

"You have left your friend," he remarked, accepting, however, her invitation.

"Ah, he wearies me!" she murmured. "You need have no fear. He has not a word of French. It wearies me, too, to speak his ugly language. You, monsieur, speak French so well for an American. You have lived in this country?"

"Only as a pilgrim," was the regretful reply. "We Americans do our best to be patriotic, but our law-makers do their best to push us over on this side if we want a little freedom."

"What sort of freedom do you want?" she asked, softly.

Mr. Billingham's answering smile was non-committal.

"Madame," he confessed, "the freedom I most desire at this moment is to talk to you very confidentially—if I might take the liberty on an acquaintance so short."

"You intrigue me," she whispered. "What have you to say to me so confidential?"

"I should like to speak," Mr. Billingham confided, "of that poop who shadows you everywhere."

She laughed; softly at first, and then unrestrainedly,

"Well," she demanded, presently, "what of him?"

"In the first place," Mr. Billingham began, "do you know who he is?"

"A rich English banker," she replied. "He is dull, he is stupid, he is not even generous, except that he is *fou de moi*. He wearies me. But what would you have? I make no pretence. I am Validia. Someone must pay that I may live."

Mr. Billingham nodded approvingly.

"Madame," he said, "I admire your frankness. I will imitate it. Your friend is not what you suppose him. He is not a banker at all. He is the local manager in an English country town of a great banking firm at a salary which would not pay for your silk stockings and gloves in the year."

"What does he do here, then?" she asked, incredulously.

"He has come into a legacy," Mr. Billingham explained, "and before investing it he has brought his wife here for a short holiday. They have never been abroad before. They have been married twenty-two years. They live in an English Cathedral city in a ten-roomed house with two maid-servants. This is his long-talked-of holiday. Of the husband and his madness you know. The wife—she is plain, between forty-five and fifty, and your maid would not wear her dresses. You only need to glance at her to realize her position. She is face to face with a new and terrible sorrow in life."

"You are a very strange person," Validia observed. "Are you in earnest?"

"More or less," Mr. Billingham assented.

"I have deceived myself perhaps in this man's story," she admitted, after a moment's reflection. "It is my imperfect knowledge of his language. Besides, he is so stupid that I thought he must be rich. How much is this legacy?"

"Less than eight thousand pounds," Mr. Billingham replied.

She yawned.

"It is a disappointment," she confessed. "I am glad that you told me. Still, if he cannot pay much for being foolish, he must pay little. Eight thousand pounds would pay my expenses here, and perhaps he can borrow something."

MR. BILLINGHAM sat for a moment in silence. She looked at him curiously. A few yards away Norton stood watching them, waiting for his opportunity to slip into the vacant place if its present occupant should take his departure.

"Is it worth your notice, a small thing like this?" Mr. Billingham asked.

She shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"Why not?" she replied. "If he has no more, then at least I should be rid of him when it was gone. You know who I am and what I am. They say of me, my friends here, that I have one quality. I am truthful. That is all. What I need of men who admire me is money. All that I have to give—and it is much—I will give to the man who can make me feel. That man will not be Mr. Norton—but what would you have? I, even like the others, must live."

Mr. Billingham smiled enigmatically.

"If you were a man," he said, "I should like to do business with you. I like your way of putting the cards upon the table. I shall now show my admiration by following your example. I am one of the few men in the world who have begged for an introduction not to offer their homage, although I am not sure that at the present moment I do not consider you the most beautiful woman in the world."

"It is something," she remarked. "It is perhaps the truth. But I do not attract you, possibly?"

She turned and looked at him—looked at him thoughtfully and with a comprehension which amazed him.

"It is true," she continued. "I do not attract you because you are another of these Saxons who possess the hateful gift of fidelity. You love another woman. Is it not so?"

"Perhaps," he admitted. "In the meanwhile, the reason why I asked to be presented to you was to beg you to open the door of that golden cage of yours and let this last captive escape."

She eyed him speculatively.

"He does not wish to escape," she declared. "And besides, why should I do as you ask? What are you offering me? Not even your homage, as you yourself have admitted."

Mr. Billingham was a brave man, but he was conscious of the peril of the moment. Nevertheless he braced himself.

"Madame," he confessed, "I have perhaps nothing to offer you. On the other hand, there is something, some negative consideration, which I think you might find adequate."

"You talk strangely, monsieur," she observed.

"It is a difficult subject."

"You need not fear to be frank with me," she told him.

"Let it be so, then. If you do not grant my request, I do not think that your nightly games at baccarat will continue."

Whatever she might have been expecting it was not this. Her face showed no surprise nor any anger. She simply seemed suddenly to have become removed into another world. She had become entirely and absolutely aloof.

"I do not understand you," she said, presently. "At baccarat I win because I have an instinct for the game. There have been many who have protested to the management against a woman being allowed to take the bank. Yet you see I continue! You cannot disturb me!"

"I shall certainly try," he warned her.

She laughed scornfully.

"A challenge!" she exclaimed. "Very well, I accept it! Come here, my good friend, Mr. Norton," she went on in English. "Why do you stand apart? You must meet this gentleman—Mr. Billingham from New York, I think he calls himself. He imagines that to-night I am not to win at baccarat. We shall see! Would you like to take a bank with me?"

"I am not sure that I have enough money with me," was the somewhat hesitating reply.

She frowned and tapped upon the floor impatiently with her foot.

"Of course I will do whatever you wish me to do," he went on hastily. "You know that I do not understand the game."

"They will cash your cheque here," she said. "Get me twenty milles and have more in your pocket. We will see whether we can win. And do not leave me again. I find these others wearisome."

She bade Mr. Billingham a mocking farewell and departed; the man at her side obviously a little bewildered by her sudden graciousness. The Marquis strolled up.

"Any luck?" he inquired.

Mr. Billingham shook his head.

"Not yet," he replied. "We have exchanged long-distance shots. I hoped for terms, but she prefers a fight."

"But I do not see, my friend, what you can do," the Marquis protested.

"I have an idea," Mr. Billingham confided. "When I have an idea of this sort it is not often a mistaken one. I have watched this game for several evenings. We shall see!"

PERHAPS because of her beauty and evil reputation, or it may have been from the magnitude of the stakes, or even that the sight of a woman taking a bank at baccarat was in itself an infrequent spectacle, the usual little crowd gathered round the table when Validia took the place which her predecessor had vacated. The first few *coups* were not productive of any great interest. The bank lost a little and gained a little. Validia sat with the face of a sphinx, drawing her card, announcing her *coup* with the air of an automaton. Presently, however, the game increased in volume. A wealthy South American, once successfully and once unsuccessfully, had called "banquo." Suddenly there was a little stir. Mr. Kretterson had strolled up and taken the place which had been reserved for him. Everyone leaned forward—the gambling was about to begin! He addressed a whispered question to the croupier as to the size of the bank, nodded, and produced a huge packet of notes.

"Fifty milles," he declared.

There was a little hush. Mr. Billingham was amongst the crowd wedged behind his chair and looking over his shoulder. By his side was a young man—one of the celebrities of the Rooms—who, out of deference, had been allowed a place almost to himself but of whom Mr. Billingham, perhaps because of his democratic principles, had never once lost sight. Kretterson picked up his cards. He had a king and a queen. He asked for a card, and glanced at it carelessly. It was a nine. Validia toyed with her own cards for a moment, then almost for the first time she raised her head. At the same moment Mr. Billingham leaned forward. Their eyes met. Palpably she hesitated. Mr. Billingham was looking directly at her with his usual good-humoured and friendly smile hovering at the corners of his lips.

Apparently, so far as he, at any rate, was concerned, no interchange of glances could have been more harmless or have lacked more completely any ulterior significance. Yet when Validia looked away her fingers were trembling. She glanced at her cards uncertainly and laid them down. She had a king and a six. The croupier began to deal out the winnings.

" What on earth did Validia hesitate for ?"

" How did you know ? " she asked, in a low tone.

Mr. Billingham shrugged his shoulders.

" I suppose because I am myself an adventurer," he replied. " I go about the world in search of strange happenings, and I am always watching for them. As a matter of fact, there is no game of cards at which I cannot perform miracles myself. I dare not play poker, even with my enemies."

someone whispered, behind Mr. Billingham. ' She couldn't possibly draw with six, having given the nine."

" Lost her head for a moment, perhaps," someone else commented. " She does make the most extraordinary draws sometimes. Hullo, she's going to quit ! "

Validia had risen to her feet with a little gesture of excuse. The croupier announced that madame was indisposed, and Mr. Kretterson, in response to a universal but unspoken invitation, took the bank. As she passed out, she touched Mr. Billingham on the arm. He followed her to a remote seat in a corner of the bar.

" Order me some brandy," she begged.

Mr. Billingham obeyed in silence. Incidentally he ordered a whisky-and-soda for himself. In a moment or two Validia spoke.

Validia toyed with her own cards for a moment, then almost for the first time she raised her head. Mr. Billingham was looking directly at her. Their eyes met.

" Still I do not understand," she murmured.

" Simple enough," he continued. " I've watched you take your bank from the background, and once or twice I've stood behind your chair. You are a woman of intelligence. Often I have seen you draw when no woman who knew the game would dream of it. That set me thinking. I looked round the table. There was one person always interested who seldom played ; who

seemed to prefer to move about and watch the drawer of cards. That person was perhaps the one human being in these Rooms whom people would be least likely to suspect of malpractice. A few nights ago I saw! I gave you a warning when I was first introduced to you. You would not take it."

"I never dreamed," she murmured, "that you suspected. I thought you meant that you would complain to the management about a woman taking the bank. Others have done it. They hate women bankers."

"To-night," Mr. Billingham went on, "I stood by the side of your—shall I call him accomplice? You dared not even look for the sign. It would have been a forlorn hope in any case, to have drawn to a six, but I think that you would have tried it if I had not stood there."

"Tell me what you propose to do," she begged.

"You will return to that poor poop Norton the twenty milles and all that you have borrowed from him," Mr. Billingham pronounced. "You will simply wash him out completely, and so far as I am concerned the matter passes from my memory."

"You will keep your own counsel?" she asked eagerly.

"Absolutely," he promised. "I am no philanthropist. I am not in the world to protect fools. If you are clever enough to bring this off, I am not one of those who would interfere."

She looked at him steadfastly.

"If you were Norton," she said, "I would not let you go."

Mr. Billingham smiled.

"Alas," he sighed, "there is that other reason you were clever enough to divine. Now go and say your farewells to this pseudo-banker of yours. But first—have you any heart at all, I wonder?"

"Not for man or woman," she answered.

"Yet for one moment look across the room," he begged. "There is a plain, middle-aged woman seated there by herself. You see her?"

"I see her," Validia assented. "She is Norton's wife."

Mr. Billingham nodded.

"She is wearing the wrong sort of clothes," he continued, "and she knows it. She is looking plain and commonplace—and she knows it. Somehow or other the truth has come to her; in here, or in the quiet times of the night, when she hasn't been able to sleep. She is suddenly frightened. Everything that made life to her has gone. She is sitting there because she hasn't the courage to cross through the Rooms—sitting there like some creature in pain. You can see all that in her face if you care to look——that commonplace face; eloquent now, perhaps, for the first time since possibly the day of her marriage, or the day her first child was born."

Validia looked across the room incuriously. Her eyes were as hard as ever, her expression unchanged.

"Yes," she said, "I see what you are trying to explain. That means nothing to me, however. I do not understand people who take account of the sufferings of others."

Mr. Billingham was silent for a moment. Then he rose to his feet. She followed suit

"I will go and keep my bargain," she promised. "On the whole you are an interesting enemy. It is a pity that you are on the other side," she added, with that queer little smile upon her lips which had turned the heads of many men and which two seasons ago had induced the critics to christen her portrait in the Salon a modern "Mona Lisa."

MR. BILLINGHAM left her at the door and went in search of Madelon. She made a little grimace as she led him back to the bar.

"Here have I been dying for an orangeade," she exclaimed, "and you sitting there with Validia, to the scandal of everybody! Your confessions, if you please!"

He drew her abruptly on one side. Norton, with unseeing eyes and uncertain footsteps, had entered the bar. All the prim stiffness of his deportment, his somewhat awkward self-assertiveness, had gone. He was like a man suddenly made natural by a catastrophe: a little frightened, cowed, stricken into common sense. He crossed towards the bar, stood there gripping the rail with one hand, called for a drink, and finished it at a gulp. His wife leaned forward from her place.

"Henry!" she called out.

He turned and looked at her, almost without recognition. Nevertheless, he made his way to her side. Mr. Billingham whispered in Madelon's ear. Together they approached. Madelon took command of the situation.

"Still not playing?" she said, pleasantly, to Mrs. Norton. "Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Billingham. This is your husband, is it not?"

Mr. Billingham seemed suddenly possessed by one of those extraordinary fits of geniality which overwhelm any situation. Mrs. Norton's confused surprise and Mr. Norton's stupor were scarcely noticeable.

"Very glad to meet you both, I'm sure," Mr. Billingham declared. "Why, there's the Marquis!" he went on, as the latter looked tentatively in. "Come right along," he invited. "Let me present you—the Marquis de Félan—Mr. and Mrs. Norton. Sit down and join us, Marquis. Waiter! A bottle of Clicquot 1911—Dry England, mind, not the Brut—some biscuits, and five glasses. You will join us in a glass of wine, Mr. Norton?"

"I thank you very much," was the colourless reply.

"Tell me you come from Exeter—a banker there," Mr. Billingham continued, producing his cigar-case. "Any connection with the British General Bank?"

"I am the manager of the Exeter branch, sir," Mr. Norton confided, with a faint return to his old assurance of manner.

"My! is that so?" Mr. Billingham exclaimed. "One of the finest banks going! I congratulate you, sir. Perhaps you know a friend of mine down there—Lord Herrington."

"Lord Herrington is one of my most valued clients," Mr. Norton declared.

"Say, if this isn't a small world!" Mr. Billingham observed, watching the wine being poured out. "That's why I like this place. We men who watch the run of things can come along and rub shoulders with all sorts and be none the worse for it, and then meet our own sort and get all the pleasure imaginable. Say, Mr. Norton, sir, I'm very glad to have met you. Lord Herrington has asked me to stay with him often. We've been associated in more than one financial enterprise on the other side. I guess I may come and look you up at Exeter. Mrs. Norton, your very good health!"

By degrees the situation seemed to become almost normal. Mr. Norton talked about the banking business with increased eloquence, whilst his wife confided to Madelon in an undertone the extraordinary difficulties presented by the servant problem in Exeter. Mr. Billingham glanced at his watch.

"I've had all the gambling I want tonight," he declared. "Let's have a change. There's a gala supper at the Carlton. Let's all go. I told them I'd most likely want a table. What do you say, Mrs. Norton? I don't look the figure for it, perhaps, but I'm a useful man at a fox-trot. You dance, of course?"

"Say, Mr. Norton, sir, I'm very glad to have met you. Mrs. Norton, your very good health!"

" We had lessons," Mrs. Norton admitted, looking doubtfully at her husband.

"Anyway, we can watch the fun," her prospective host continued. " Come along, all of you. We'll get an automobile outside. There are one or two questions about banking matters over on your side," he went on, slipping his arm through Mr. Norton's, " I've wanted to ask a man of your experience."

AT three o'clock on the following morning Madelon and Mr. Billingham watched their guests step into a *voiture* outside the Carlton. Mr. Norton handed his wife in amidst a general exchange of good-humoured farewells, and was most insistent that no one should forget his luncheon engagement with him on the morrow. He drew the rug over his wife and leaned back by her side, waving his hand with something of his old complacence. Suddenly Mr. Billingham felt Madelon's fingers grasping his arm.

" You are the dearest person in the world," she whispered. " Not only that, but you are the greatest diplomatist. Did you know that he was holding his wife's hand? And did you see him smile at her at the table? If ever a man was trying to assure her that he was sorry and that he had to be forgiven, he was doing it. And her face—why, she was almost good-looking ! "

Mr. Billingham watched the approach of the *voiture* which he had summoned.

" I guess that little affair's fixed up all right," he conceded. " I wonder——"

Suddenly he was silent; thoughtful, almost depressed. Her fingers lingered in his as he handed her into the carriage.

" Sometimes," she whispered—" I wonder, too ! "

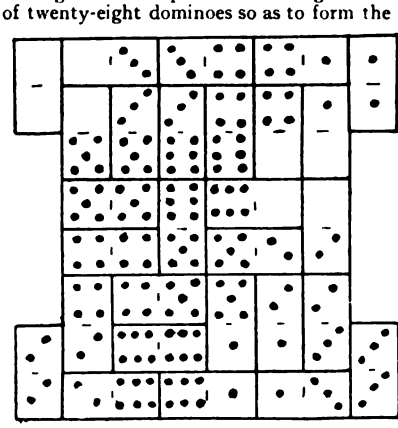
The next story in this series is entitled: " The Stink Wizard."

PERPLEXITIES

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

777.—LES QUADRILLES.

THIS old French puzzle will, I think, be found very interesting. It is required to arrange a complete set of twenty-eight dominoes so as to form the figure



shown in our illustration, with all the numbers forming a series of squares. Thus, in the upper two rows we have a square of blanks, and a square of four 3's, and a square of 4's, and a square of 1's; in the third and fourth rows we have squares of 5, 6, and blank, and so on. This is, in fact, a perfect solution under the conditions usually imposed, but what I now ask for is an arrangement with no blanks anywhere on the outer edge. At present every number from blank to 6 inclusive will be found somewhere on the margin. Can you construct an arrangement with all the blanks inside?

778.—SQUARES AND CUBES.

CAN you find two whole numbers, such that the difference of their squares is a cube and the difference of their cubes is a square? What is the answer in the smallest possible numbers?

779.—MULTIPLICATION DATES.

HAS it happened to occur to you that there are two dates in this year, 25/1/25 and 5/5/25, when the day multiplied by the month equals the year? Thus, $25\times1=25$, $5\times5=25$. Now, how many times in this century, 1901–2000 inclusive, does this so happen? If you do not care to undertake the enumeration, though it is not without interest, you should try to find which year in the century gives the largest number of days that comply with the conditions. There is one year that beats all the others. Which is it?

780.—ODDS AND EVENS.

READERS may remember our No. 627, " The Solitary Seven " (November, 1922). This puzzle, by the Rev. E. F. O., attracted considerable attention and was discussed in one of our mathematical journals with full analysis. This correspondent now sends me the following skeleton sum in simple division. Every asterisk and letter represents a figure and " O " stands for an odd figure (1, 3, 5, 7, or 9), while " E " represents an even figure (2, 4, 6, 8, or 0). Can you construct an arrangement complying with these conditions? The inventor has not sent me his solution, but I have found two correct arrangements, and probably there are a few more. It is a pity there is more than one solution, but it

will be found quite entertaining to construct any arrangement that works. One key I have found is the fact that multiples of the divisor (calling 1 a multiple) can take four different forms of O, E, in three figures.

```
* * *)* * * * * * * * *(* * * * * * *
  O E *
  -----
    * * *
    O O * *
    -------
      * * *
      E E *
      -----
        * * *
        E O *
        -----
          * * * *
          E E * *
          -------
            * * *
            O O *
            -----
            -----
```

781.—BURIED ANIMALS.

CAN the reader discover six buried animals and one bird in the following two sentences?

"Come hither, mine friend," said the monk, eyeing him kindly. "Be a very good boy, step through the furze bravely, and seek the lost riches."

"We, as electricians, proclaim the electric motor cab a boon to London."

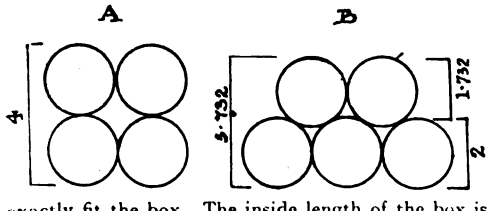
Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

772.—A FINE CHESS ENDING.

IN order to win White must drive the Black King into a corner and then get his Queen back to the eighth row on a square where it is not *en prise* of the other Queen. Thus, 1 P—R 8 (Q), 1 P—R 8 (Q); 2 Q—Kt 8 (a), 2 Q—R 7; 3 Q—K 8, 3 Q—R 5; 4 Q—K 5, ch, 4 K—R sq; 5 Q—R 8, 5 Q—K B 5, (b); 6 Q—Q R sq, ch, 6 Q—Q R 5; 7 Q takes Q, ch, 7 K moves; Q—R 7, mate. (a) If 2 Q—K 8 at once, 2 Q—Kt 2 draws. And if 2 Q—B 8, 2 Q—R 6 draws, for if now 3 Q—K 8, 3 Q—Q 3, ch; 4 Q—Q 7, 4 Q × Q, ch. Or 3 Q—B 4, ch, 3 K—R sq. Or 3 Q—B 5, 3 Q—Q 3, ch; 4 K moves, 4 Q × P. (b) If 5 Q—R 5, ch (or 5 Q—Q 5, ch), 6 Q × Q, etc. Otherwise White mates in 2, by K moves, discovering check, etc.

773.—PACKING CIGARETTES.

SAY the diameter of a cigarette is 2 units and that 8 rows of 20 each, as in Fig. A (that is, 160 cigarettes)



exactly fit the box. The inside length of the box is therefore 40 and the depth 16. Now, if we place 20 in the bottom row and, instead of placing 20 in the next row, we drop 19 into the position shown in Fig. B, we save .268 (*i.e.*, $2 - \sqrt{3}$) in height. This second row, and every additional row of 20 and 19, alternately, will increase the height by 1.732. Therefore we shall have 9 rows reaching to a height of $2 + 8 \times 1.732$ or 15.856, which is less than our depth of 16. We shall thus increase the number of cigarettes by 20 (through the additional row), and reduce it by 4 (1 in each row of 19), making a net increase of 16 cigarettes.

774.—DIVIDING BY THIRTY-SEVEN.

CALL the required numbers ABCABCABC. If the sum of the A digits, the B digits, and the C digits respectively are—

A	B	C
18	19	8
15	15	15
12	11	22
19	8	18
22	12	11
8	18	19
11	22	12

then in the first three groups 11 A—10 B=C. In the next two groups 11 A—10 B—C=111 (3×37); and in the last two groups 10 B+C—11 A=111. It does not matter what the figures are, but if they comply with these conditions we can always divide by 37. Here is an example of the first case—

ABCABCABC,
9 8 4 7 6 3 2 5 1,

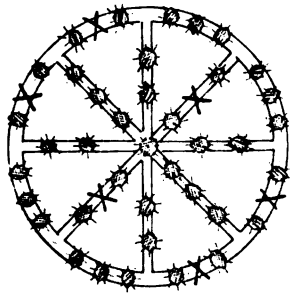
where the 3 A's sum to 18, the 3 B's to 19, and the 3 C's to 8. You will find 22 cases with the first equation, 10 with the second, and 10 with the third, making 42 fundamental cases in all. But in every case the A figures may be permuted in 6 ways, and the B figures in 6 ways, and the C figures in 6 ways, making $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$, which multiplied by 42 gives the answer 9072 ways divisible by 37. As the 9 digits may be permuted in 362880 ways the chances are $\frac{9072}{362880}$ or $\frac{1}{40}$, or 39 to 1 against divisibility.

775.—MISSING WORDS.

THE three words in their order are ROUGES, ROGUES, and GROUSE.

776.—THE SAPPHIRE BROOCH.

IN the illustration the crosses indicate the places from which six of the stones have been removed.



One of these has been reset in the centre. Thus, five stones have been stolen and those that remain still count eight in every segment.

A DEBT OF HONOUR

By

PERCEVAL GIBBON

ILLUSTRATED BY A. GILBERT R.O.I.

IT was possibly characteristic of him that his last verifiable words should have been spoken upon a small iron chair, set out on the *terrasse* of the Café de la Paix in Paris. For the matter of that, he was a man who might have repeated the Sermon on the Mount from the bottom of a valley.

It was Cobb, that Parisian of twenty years' standing, whom Paris had never succeeded in assimilating, who, crossing the boulevard, stopped short among the stampeding taxi-cabs and gazed upon him. He recognized, in worn, but brilliantly correct, tweeds, one whom he had last seen in the showy upholstery of a Spanish officer of cavalry—Captain Don Miguel O Flynn—no less!

"Mike!" shouted Cobb, and charged across the road, to the scandal of the traffic and of the populace. "Mike, you old blaggard! Are you pretending not to know me again?"

Don Miguel raised a face, beaky as an eagle's, coloured with sun and weather like a Red Indian's, and nodded. It was half a nod and half a bow.

"Ah!" he said, with profound calm. "It's you, Cobb!"

Cobb sat himself down with determination in the other chair alongside the little table. Then he spoke.

"You're a liar, Mike!" he remarked. "It's not me—Cobb! It's me—Tim! Same as it used to be! What's the matter with you, anyhow? And what are you wearing these clothes for? Last time I saw you was at Algeciras, an' you looked like a Christmas-tree, with your medals and orders an' all! Have they kicked you out at last?"

There was no misunderstanding his tone of friendly familiarity and chaff. Captain Michael O'Flynn—late Don Miguel of that ilk—did not misunderstand it at all. But, none the less, he looked down unsmiling for some instants before he replied.

"Yes!" he said then. "They have that! They couldn't do less, the way it was!"

There was another pause while Cobb gazed at him, a little aghast. For in that tall swart man, with the lifelong habit of venture and devilry written as plain upon him as the sun-scorch upon his face, there had come a gravity that fitted him as strangely as his civil clothes. Cobb had been at school with him; he knew the circumstances that had caused his expulsion from Sandhurst; his services in the South African War which had won a commission for him; his exploits in Peking which had led to a court-martial for looting; his varied commissions in nondescript wars under unstable Balkan kings, the Sultan, and the Czar.

"Mike!" he said. "What's all this?"

The other moved in a motion that was half-reckless, half-despairing—the little

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brother of a shrug. He even made a sound like a choked laugh.

"I s'pose," he said, "it's remembering the good friend you were to me when I was a little chap at school an' you were a big chap. I've the half of a mind to tell you. But, mind you, you're bringing it on yourself!"

Cobb made a little grimace. "I'm fourteen stone in my bare skin," he answered. "I can carry anything I bring on myself. But, Mike, old feller, you don't need to tell me anything. If you're in a mess, I've got two fists, a tongue, and a cheque-book. How many of those do you want?"

"I got all of them, too," answered Don Miguel. "Better fists, if it comes to that, an' more hell-fire to my tongue, an' plenty behind my cheque-book. And, Tim, old man"—he looked round; his eagle-face did not soften at all, for those faces don't; it hardened, if anything, in a quick sincerity of feeling—"I've got a better and a readier friend than you ever had."

Cobb would have cursed him for the compliment, but the other shook his head. The tall formidable man, with his awful record of mercenary warfare, his known valour, and his notorious ruthlessness in war, had for the moment a grave simplicity of demeanour, like that of a sorrowful child.

"No!" he said. "There's one thing ye've got that I've lost! An' that's a thing I can't borrow."

"You can, Mike!" answered Cobb. "Go ahead and try! What is it?"

The other tall man turned his fighter's face upon Cobb. He laughed briefly; it sounded like a sob.

"It's me honour!" he answered. "Will you wrap that up for me in a little parcel an' send it round to my hotel? You will not? No, I thought ye'd shy at that! An' now, damn ye! I'll tell ye about it!"

And then he told.

I WAS in that business on the Riff frontier (he said, and added the precise dates); 'twas for that they took me on, to goat-lead their infernal cavalry up into the traps that was waitin' everywhere for us to spring them on ourselves. It was a most ungodly great streak of country, wid wonderful scenery, where one Riffian wid a modern rifle—an' some o' the blaggards wasn't above usin' telescopic sights on us, an' makin' very pretty practice, too—could picnic on a hillside in the lee of a boulder an' hold up a whole battalion. And there was me, skirmishing ahead, an' seein' no more of glorious war—somebody called it that, but for me, that's lived on it for twenty years, it's been mainly dirt, an' hunger, and workin' meself to death—seein' no more of it than a trooper goin' down yellin', with his ironmongery clatterin in the stones an' a German Mauser bullet infestin' his vitals! An' then came the night, at the head of a ghastly great stony valley, like a tunnel with nc roof to it, an' the sides of it, steep as a roof, just powdered with convenient rocks and nice handy scrub for ambush parties, when the column bogged down. An' the night was as black as my colonel's heart an' as thick as his head, an' we were as lost as his soul.

Me. I was sent for to give my observations on the fact that we weren't where we wanted to be an' that we were liable to be rushed an' crumpled up from the front an' both flanks any time the Riffians got tired of us. There was our General—Alfaro, his name was—standin' behind his little table wid a bicycle lamp on it an' a whole mess of colonels, an' clerks, an' scum, an' orderlies holdin' horses bunched round him in the dark. He was talkin' to a sort of feller we'd got, a yellow-belly, in what you'd call the Intelligence, that hadn't had any more intelligence himself than to put himself forward as guide in a patch of land that no Christian man ever saw before.

"And so," the General was saying, "you make it clear that you have misled us?"

There was the bicycle lamp switched round to shine on the guide, a little *café-au-lait*-coloured man, wearing a uniform what was too big for him, an' sweating and quaking where he stood. You couldn't see the General, behind the lamp; I just knew him for a great fat lump of a man, with a range of dark-blue chins an' a little streak of black moustache wedged in between his nose an' his lip. An' his voice was like treacle dripping out of a leak in a can.

"Excellency!" the little guide was babbling. "It was at the noon bivouac. There I made a mistake—it was an error—when we resumed the march, I took the wrong direction. I—I——"

The General cut in. He was a devil. "You made no mistake," he said. "No man ever loses the road to his grave. You found yours."

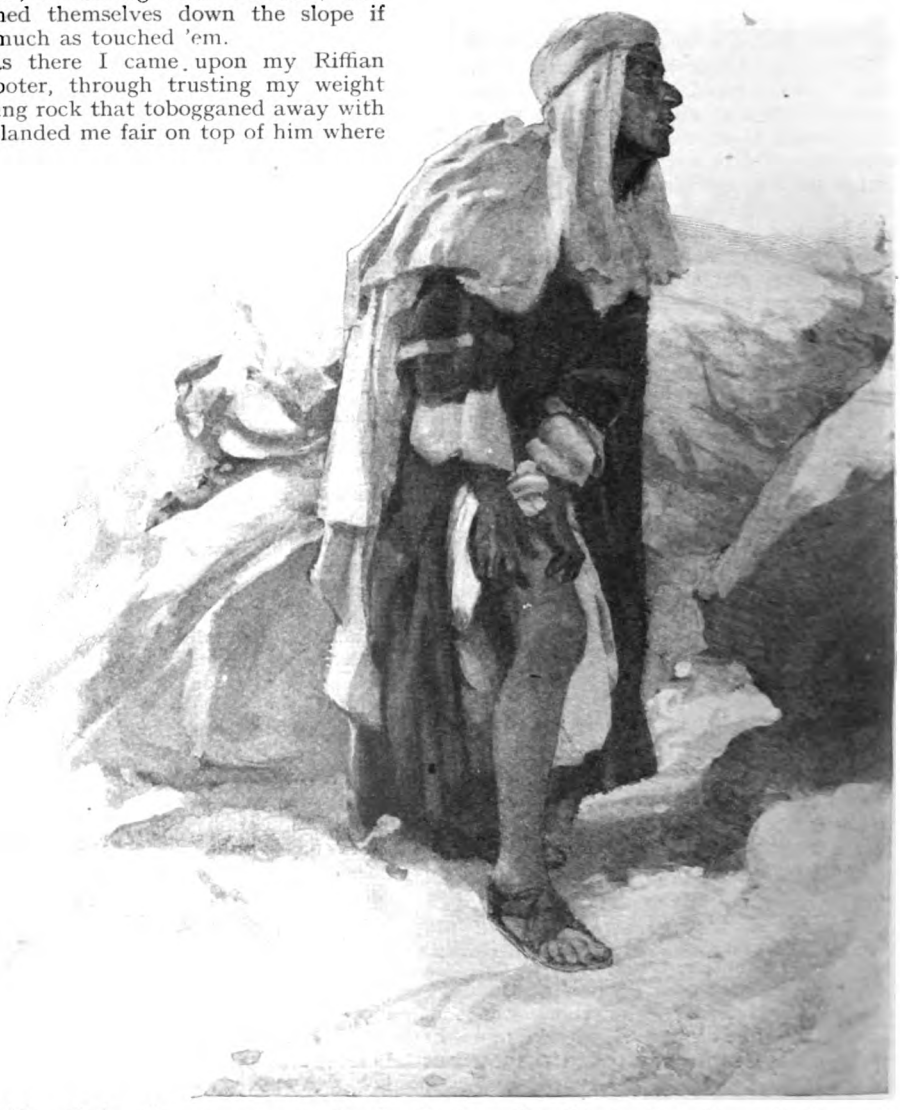
I saw the bulk of him move; 'twas no more than a bulk I could see—except for the flame of the revolver when he picked it up off the table before him. The little guide—was he a traitor? I don't know!—just put out his hands and went down on his face, shot through the head. I never saw a piece of killing in war-time that looked more like murder. Then—

"Captain O'Flynn!" An' I stood out before him, wid the bicycle lamp shinin' on my face and a blast of questions beatin' upon me.

"Where were we and where was the enemy?" That was the marrow of them;

an' how in the world was I to know? I'll not bother you with a report of our discourse, though I'm not ashamed o' my share of it; but the last end of it was that when the attack came in the pit of the night, there was me scouting on my belly, half-way up a damned slope of great loose boulders, lookin' to see if anybody was at home and praying there wasn't. Think o' me, out there, and hearing the crash an' smash of the attack away behind me and the tangle-up of our noble column as it sky-hooted to hike itself out of action and get back to home and mother! Leavin' me alone, mind you, all among them boulders, that avalanched themselves down the slope if you so much as touched 'em.

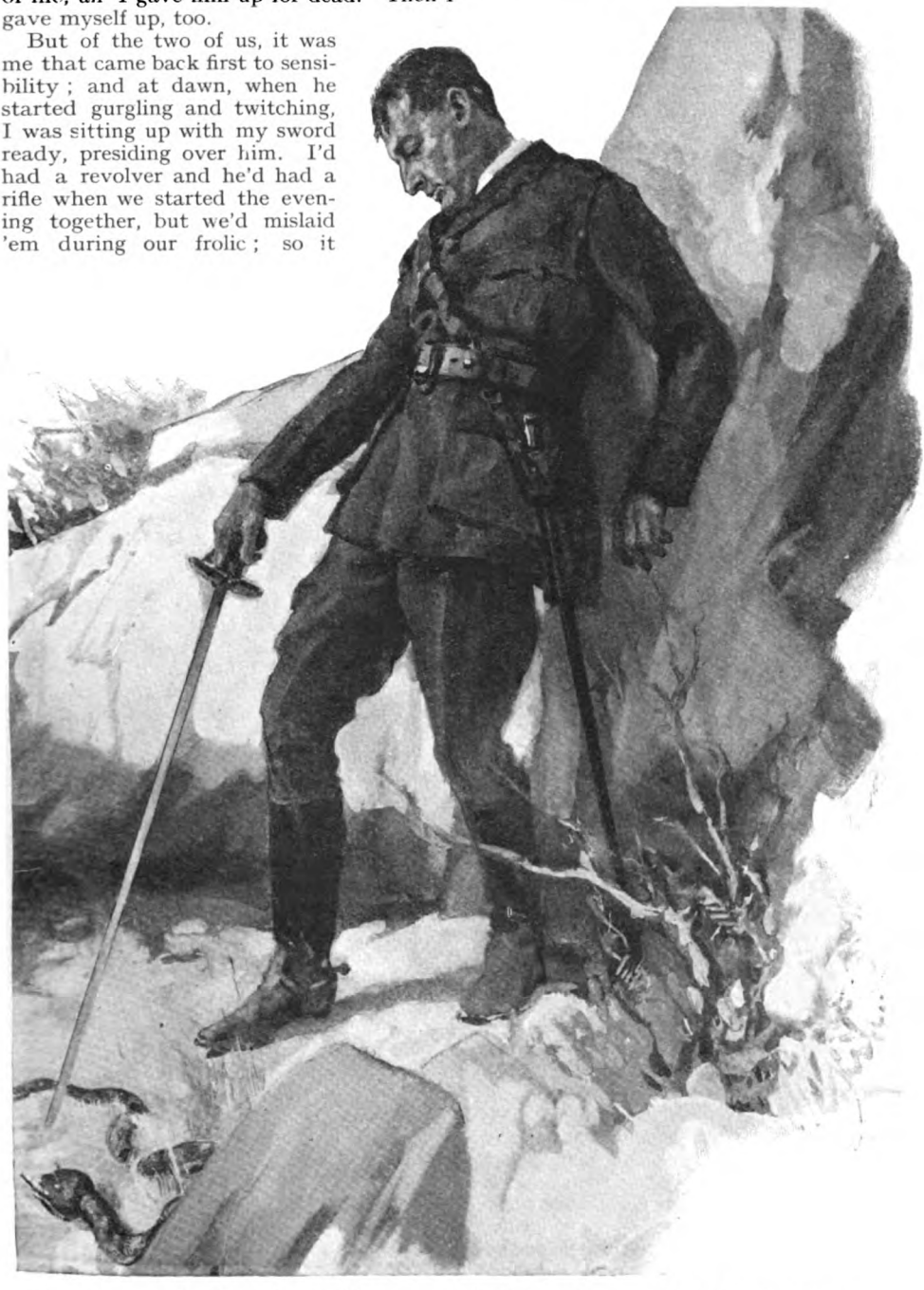
It was there I came upon my Riffian sharpshooter, through trusting my weight to a young rock that tobogganed away with me and landed me fair on top of him where he was enjoying himself squirting bullets into the darkness where my gallant comrades were busy getting out of range. Me, of course, as soon as I felt flesh and hair within reach of my hands, I snatched hold of 'em. He wasn't anyways backward at rough-and-tumble himself, and the two of us went bowling down over a bit of a ledge that was there, locked together like two brothers. It felt like a precipice at the time, an' there was a shockin' bump when we landed. I know I felt the pain of it go soaking through me like water you'd mop up with a sponge. 'Twas me left shoulder



He yelled and sprang up with his hands clapped to his leg just above the knee. I separate pieces of snake

an' the big bone of me arm an' a span of ribs that crumpled, but the rest of me was saved by landing mostly on my prisoner. I heard him squelch as he took the weight of me, an' I gave him up for dead. Then I gave myself up, too.

But of the two of us, it was me that came back first to sensibility; and at dawn, when he started gurgling and twitching, I was sitting up with my sword ready, presiding over him. I'd had a revolver and he'd had a rifle when we started the evening together, but we'd mislaid 'em during our frolic; so it looked as if my sword was the ace of trumps. Of course, there was my near side all out of action, but it wasn't in my plans to let him know that.



saw soon enough what his trouble was, and that snake was just six or seven in a couple of seconds.

HE took quite a time to come to. He was a well-looking lad, about eighteen or nineteen or twenty and no darker complected than a lot of Spaniards I'd seen.

"You're my prisoner," I said to him, when at last he propped up on his hands and looked at me and my sword.

He nodded slowly and sat up. He understood Spanish all right.

"And you're a dead man if you try any tricks," I went on. "It's up to you to find me a safe way out o' this and back to the Spanish lines, and to find it quick. Got any ideas?"

The beggar smiled at me and shook his head.

"Impossible," he said. "The valley is too well watched. Even here you will be seen very soon."

"Then we'll get out of here *muy pronto*," I said. "There's plenty of hiding-places in this stoneyard, and we can lie up till dark. Go on ahead and go right, or I'll ram this through your gizzard."

He led the way quietly enough, till we came to a little place among the stones all shut in by that rotten camel-thorn. There would be shade there when the sun was high and it couldn't be seen from the top of the slope. Water, of course, there was none; that was a thing I'd have to think about; but I called a halt.

"We'll camp here," I said. "Sit down there, you, and start thinking. And keep mighty quiet while you're doing it."

If only he'd known it, I was that shuddering sick with pain that he could have strolled off as he pleased and I'd have been powerless to take a wallop at him. But he didn't know it; and he started to sit down as docile and obedient as you'd wish to see.

And then he yelled and sprang up with his hands clapped to his leg just above the knee.

He startled me so that I nearly fell, and if I'd been in better trim that yell might have cost him dear. But I saw soon enough what his trouble was. There the damned thing was, rippling away across the earth, a four-foot long piece of filth, carrying death in its mouth and disgust in the look of it. Some kind of cobra, I believe it was, or an adder or something; I don't know anything about snakes and I don't want to. The look of 'em makes it easy for me to believe in hell.

I had the sword, and the yell and the start I'd got sort of galvanized me, and that snake was just six or seven separate pieces of snake in a couple of seconds. And there we were, my prisoner and I, me smashed and helpless, him with death crawling through his veins, staring at each other. And then I threw the sword down.

To this day I'm not sure why I did what I did. I've been hoping that's because, though killing is my trade, saving life might be my vocation. With only my right hand I put him down. He was a sort of nigger, mind you, and there's moments when it's difficult to think of the flesh of him without feeling sickish. But at that time there was just us two, both men of sorts, and death playin' with us an' toyin' with us before it smashed us down. Men, white or black, can't submit to that, you know. There were the punctures of the bite, with tiny drops of blood hanging on them. I pinned him down and put my mouth to the place. And then I bit the piece clean out.

And, man, I sucked like a vacuum cleaner. I sucked and spat and sucked and spat till I'd like to have drained him. And it was while I was still at it that my shoulder an' my arm an' my ribs took hold of me, and I fell across his knees in a good old-fashioned faint.

Well, that was the worst of our troubles. You can't save a man's life like that and then feel like his enemy, and him—he was too grateful altogether to be agreeable company! I lay in that place for three days, him fetching me food and water. On the fourth night we sneaked clear of the valley and started for the nearest Spanish lines. It was three days of going, an' pretty hard on me; but we hobbled and crawled and staggered and lived on goat's cheese—it tasted more like dog's—and dates. Ah, that boy was good to me! He believed the Spaniards would shoot him; and so they would have, but I passed him my word of honour that they wouldn't. My word of honour, mind you; about all that the years had left me to pledge. He trusted it; and now that's gone where so much else went before it.

Cobb frowned thoughtfully. "You mean they did shoot him after all?"

O'Flynn shook his head. "They couldn't do that," he said. "I was before General Alfaro himself before I went into hospital, and I told him what I had sworn and how and why. And he nodded, wagging all his jowls quite agreeable. 'Assuredly, assuredly!' he said. 'Your word shall be respected, of course. I promsie you that.' So I went into hospital with an easy mind. I stayed there till I deserted."

"Deserted!" repeated Cobb. "You deserted! But why? What's all this talk, anyhow? You say they didn't shoot your man, so why——"

O'Flynn shook his head that never would wear a badged cap again.

"No," he said. "That was Alfaro's idea of a joke. He didn't shoot him; he hanged him!"

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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The Strand Magazine

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He lifted his hat and left them. As his slight, graceful figure disappeared, Cynthia exclaimed: "Mother! Why, oh, why, were you so outspoken? I—I feel humiliated."

An incident from H. A. Vachell's story, "Narcissa—and a Photographer." *(See page 533.)*

NARCISSA—AND A PHOTOGRAPHER

BY

H. A. VACHELL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

I.

A MAN was walking down a country lane, carrying a camera. He walked lightly, almost jauntily, as if he were care-free and on a holiday. And he whistled as he walked. Country girls glanced at his whimsical face, half-smilingly, but he took little notice of them. His clear grey eyes, the eyes of a man with long sight, had a bird-like quality. He happened to be a lover of birds, and on this heavenly June morning he was looking for birds, the rarer warblers. Presently he passed a wicket gate leading into a wood. Above the gate was the usual sign: "Trespassers

Narcissa ran to the board, executed a hop, skip, and a jump—and disappeared.

will be prosecuted." From the wood came the fluting of many warblers. The man stood still and listened. After a minute or two he walked back to the gate, leaned upon it, still listening, and then opened it. Possibly he never saw the sign. If he did, he disregarded the warning. A grass ride, sloping upwards, curved in front of him. A cock pheasant scuttled across it. A country gentleman would have known at once that this hanging wood was a game preserve. The grass ride had obviously been made for the convenience of "guns," who could hold straight upon high birds sailing over tree-tops. And about the wood, delightfully wild as it might appear, hung the unmistakable air of guardianship and the art of forestry. Any sportsman would have said to himself: "This belongs to a rich man."

The trespasser, too intent upon his hobby to think of anything else, ascended nimbly the sharp slope of the ride. A jay uttered a warning scream. The man stood still in a sanctuary of birds. Two jays scolded him. From this a sportsman might have made another deduction. Gamekeepers destroy jays, which have a playful habit of sucking pheasants' eggs. Obviously, game preservation had ceased to be a matter of supreme importance to the owner of the wood.

The photographer left the ride and crept silently into a tiny grove of firs. He was stalking that rare bird, the crossbill, sometimes known as the German Parrot, but it evaded him. Finally, he abandoned a stern chase, and pursued a less shy quarry that might or might not be a Dartford Warbler. Below the clump of firs were patches of gorse; in and out of these the tiny bird flitted exasperatingly. To photograph any bird at reasonably close range exacts unfailing patience.

Within an hour the man discovered that he had lost himself; and he had taken no photographs. Also, it was uncomfortably hot. Trying to find his way out of the wood, he came upon a lovely pool, and at the farther end of it stood a rustic hut, built upon a platform. On the platform was a diving-board. The trespasser surveyed the hut at his leisure. As the door was wide open, he passed through it. Upon a table were cups and saucers and plates made of yellow Italian pottery; upon a hook on the wall hung a two-piece bathing-dress of vivid scarlet. A jaunty little cap surmounted this. A keen observer noticed that the hut had been used lately. No dust lay upon the pottery. He touched the bathing-dress and found it slightly damp. He apostrophized it:—

"A dark lady wears you."

Being fair himself, he admired dark

ladies. His lively fancy played, lambent as lightning, about the hut. Yes; only a *brune* would wear a scarlet so vivid, and pour tea out of yellow cups. He sat down, wondering whether he dared bathe in this pool sacrosanct to some *brune*. The water wooed him seductively. Had she bathed that morning or yesterday? He decided that it must have been yesterday. He beheld her standing, a Narcissa, upon the edge of Nature's mirror, and falling in love with her reflected beauty.

"Who are you?" she asked, coldly. "What are you doing in my hut?"

He found a bath-towel, also slightly damp, and in the corner of it were two C's intertwined. He saw a big red silk umbrella such as old women still use in the South of France. A rough book-shelf held books. He glanced at the books and whistled softly.

"We are intrigued," he exclaimed.

Books in such a place reveal taste and character. Nobody carries books they don't read to a hut in the woods. He found a much-used Shelley, a book on birds, another on butterflies, "The Cardinal's Snuff-Box," Bazin's "La Terre Qui Meurt," and "Puck of Pook's Hill." His eyes brightened and twinkled as they rested upon an original edition of Sam Butler's "Essays on Life, Art, and Science." He began to experience a consuming desire to make the acquaintance of the *brune*. He felt that he could talk at his ease to her and with her. Upon a small desk were writing materials. He picked up a sheet of notepaper. In the corner was the same cipher, but no address. Staring at the intertwined C's, he spoke aloud for the third time:—

"I hope her name isn't Charlotte."

"It isn't," said a voice.

The man turned swiftly. In the doorway stood a young woman, surveying an intruder with dark, derisive eyes. She was tall and slender, a creature of colour, sun-tanned, red of cheeks and lips, a dryad. The man removed his hat and stood abashed before her.

"Who are you?" she asked, coldly. "What are you doing in my hut?"

"I'm a photographer," he answered. "For an hour or more I have been chasing what I believe to be a Dartford Warbler. I lost myself; but I found this hut."

"A gentleman would not have entered it."

"I agree."

"May I ask why you chase Dartford Warblers in a wood strictly private?"

"I photograph the rarer birds."

"That is your business?"

"My business and my pleasure. I'm on a holiday; and I combine both."

"Apparently you don't think it necessary even to apologize for this deliberate trespass?"

"But I do. If it will give you any satisfaction I will lie down and let you trample on me."

"Have you taken any photographs?"

"Not one. I have only taken a liberty for which again I apologize—abjectly."

She noticed that he spoke English with a slight accent.

"You are not English."

He bowed and smiled.

"Then I make allowances. You are perhaps a—German?" She had nearly said "a Hun."

"I am not. With your gracious permission, may I try once more to find the high road?"

"You will have no difficulty. That path leads into a carriage drive. Turn to the right, and you will pass through lodge gates."

"I am infinitely obliged."

As he turned to go the young woman said, sharply:—

"Please wait a moment. You have your camera. As a matter of business would you care to take a photograph of this pool and the hut? Are you an expert?"

He smi'ed again.

"On that I can reassure you. Look!"

He took from his waistcoat pocket a gold medal, holding it up.

"This is a gold medal, won by me last year in Norland."

"Norland?"

"Norland."

Cynthia Conklin, for that was her name, eyed him with greater interest.

"Are you, by any chance, in attendance on the Crown Prince?"

"In attendance? Hardly that. I am in his suite. I take photographs."

"All is explained," murmured Cynthia. She added pleasantly: "We knew that the Crown Prince was staying with the Duke, who is our nearest neighbour. Probably you thought this wood belonged to him."

"I did not think, mademoiselle. In my country the woods, for the most part, are open to those who wish to walk through them."

"This, mother, is——" young man finished the courtly bow. "I am a grapher.

"How well you speak English!"

"I have studied in England. Shall I take the photograph?"

"It would be very kind of you."

Immediately he went to work with professional promptness and skill. Indeed, Cynthia felt slightly humiliated, inasmuch as he displayed an intimate appreciation of the beauties of the pool which astonished her. He took three photographs, and then glanced at the nymph.

"If I could take you, Miss Narcissa——"

"Why do you call me that? Is self-love inscribed upon my face?"

"No; but your face reflected in this pool would justify such an assumption."

She ignored the compliment, but was not displeased with it.

"Have you taken the Crown Prince?"

"Never. But I have taken his father and

She paused. The sentence with a humble photo-madame."

mother. Perhaps you have met the Crown Prince?"

"Not yet."

"He hates being photographed."

"So do I."

"Good! I respect young ladies who hate being photographed."

She laughed gaily; all ice was broken. In the lightest tone, she asked the first intimate question:—

"Tell me why you dislike the name Charlotte?"

"I have an aunt of that name, a truly detestable person with a moustache. The Crown Prince called her——" he broke off abruptly.

"Yes——?"

"Narcissa—forgive me. I am a law-breaker and a trespasser, but I obey the unwritten laws. It is an unwritten law that what princes say to their friends must never be repeated."

"Oh! You are a friend of the Crown Prince?"

He bowed politely. Cynthia's cheeks displayed a deeper damask.

"I'm quite sure now that I oughtn't to have asked you to take those photographs. It was cheeky of me."

"But—not at all."

"And, dear me! I accused you of not being a gentleman."

"You were justified. An English gentleman can resist the greatest of temptations."

"Can he?"

"I am speaking of—curiosity."

As his eyes wandered involuntarily to the bathing-dress, she said, demurely:—

"Have your curiosities been satisfied?"

"Not altogether. By the way, the Duchess is giving a garden-party to-morrow afternoon. Are you assisting?"

"We—mother and I—have not been asked to assist."

"I am sorry."

Cynthia was at a loss to decide whether the speaker was sorry that he had touched upon a possible grievance, or, more probably, regretted that he would not have the opportunity of renewing an informal acquaintance.

"You will be there?" she asked.

"For my sins, yes. I hate parties; I hate formalities; I hate wearing uncomfortable clothes——"

At this moment a voice was heard.

"Cynthia!"

"I'm here, mother." She turned with a smile to the photographer. "You see my name is not Charlotte."

"It—it couldn't be."

Mrs. Conklin sailed into view, an impressive personality. She expected to see a young woman in a scarlet bathing dress. She saw instead a stranger upon whom her eyes rested interrogatively. Cynthia did the honours, if they can be so described.

"This is my mother, Mrs. Conklin. And this, mother, is——" She paused. The young man finished the sentence with a courtly bow.

"I am a humble photographer, madame."

"This gentleman is a foreigner. He lost his way in our woods. I found him here. He has taken—to oblige me—a few photographs of the pool."

Mrs. Conklin vouchsafed a foreigner and a photographer a careless nod. Cynthia added hastily:—

"He is an expert. He—he has taken the

King and Queen of Norland. He is at the Duke's, in the suite of the Crown Prince."

"Indeed! Really!"

Mrs. Conklin smiled graciously. She was one who believed in Divine dispensations. She had a glimpse, no more, of the beneficent finger of Providence. It seemed to beckon. Also, she was a reader of the picture papers, a faithful subscriber to *The Prattler*. There was something, an elusive something, about this stranger which appeared familiar. But she was quite sure that she had never met him in the flesh.

"It is very hot," she observed. "My house is not five minutes distant. As—as you have been so kind in taking these photographs to—to oblige my daughter, will you allow me to offer you a little light refreshment, a lemonade, or, if you prefer it, a whisky-and-soda?"

Cynthia betrayed surprise. The man bowed again.

"I am thirsty," he confessed. "I should be a churl to refuse so kind an invitation."

The three strolled towards the house.

II.

IT was a pretentious house, built regardless of expense (and taste) by the late John Conkiin, a Liverpool shipping magnate. But it stood in enchanting gardens. Without provocation—other than her own sense of the dramatic—Mrs. Conklin satisfied more curiosities. As the three sat down in the shade of a mighty elm the lady of the house became biographical.

"My late husband built the house—a mistake."

That happened to be her guest's opinion, but he didn't say so. Volubly, Mrs. Conklin explained what she meant. It was a grievous mistake to spend well-earned money in a county, rather remote from London, ruled over by a Duke.

"We hardly realized," continued Mrs. Conklin, "that this is called the Duke's country. He is supreme here. The Duchess called. I returned her call. There the matter ended."

Cynthia looked distressed, perhaps unreasonably.

"We are regarded," said Mrs. Conklin, "as carpet-baggers. We paid a large price for the property; we bought it from an impoverished kinsman of the Duke. We have built cottages; we have improved the estate; we have, in a word, done our duty——"

She paused. Her guest said, sympathetically:—

"Doing one's duty is so tiresome."

Cynthia, meanwhile, held her tongue. She sat, petrified with astonishment staring at an indiscreet mother. Had a grievance become an obsession? What would this foreigner think? She eyed his whimsical face anxiously. Would he repeat to the local magnate these unwarrantable confidences? Would they provoke laughter and sneers?

Desperately, she stammered out:—

"M-m-mother—! Our p-private affairs c-can hardly interest a stranger."

The stranger contradicted this promptly.

"But they do," he asserted, gallantly. "It is a great compliment, I assure you. It makes me feel less of a 'stranger.'" Then warmth informed his pleasant voice. "Also, it is to me, a foreigner, something of an outrage that two such charming ladies should not be welcomed, eagerly welcomed anywhere — in any society."

"May I show you the photographs?"

Mrs. Conklin beamed upon him. He continued as warmly: "The Duke and the Duchess are the kindest people. They cannot realize——"

He broke off, with a gesture. Cynthia perceived a man-servant, carrying light refreshment, and within earshot. Obviously, humble photographers from Norland had the instincts of English gentlemen.

Their visitor drank his lemonade slowly, talked agreeably upon the beauties of the garden, and then took his leave.

"I shall send you the photographs," he said to Cynthia; "and perhaps—who knows?—we may meet again."

Mrs. Conklin replied, majestically:—

"We shall meet again, if you care to bring the photographs instead of sending them."

He smiled assent, lifted his hat, and left them. As his slight, graceful figure disappeared round a clump of rhododendrons, Cynthia exclaimed:—

"Mother! Why, oh, why, were you so outspoken? I—I feel humiliated. Everything you have said may be repeated."

"No."

"I say it may be. I see all those smart people laughing at us."

"My dear! You haven't guessed——?"

"What?"

"Our visitor is the Crown Prince of Norland. I seized what I believe," she spoke solemnly, "to be a God-sent opportunity."

Cynthia gasped.

"Stay here," commanded Mrs. Conklin. "I shall return in a minute, bringing with me," she concluded, triumphantly—"PROOF."

Cynthia fanned herself with a picture hat.

Mrs. Conklin came back with a copy of the current *Prattler*.

"There! Look for yourself."

She pointed to a group of personages. Standing next to the greatest gentleman in the realm was a tall, thin man wearing very uncomfortable clothes. Readers of *The Prattler* were informed that Their Majesties were entertaining at Buckingham Palace the Crown Prince and Princess of Norland.

"Are you satisfied, child?"

"I am stupefied," replied Cynthia.

III.

THAT afternoon, just after tea-time, a belted and cockaded groom upon a magnificent horse delivered a large square envelope, addressed to Mrs. Conklin. Upon the flap of it was a ducal coronet. The envelope contained a card. Mrs. and Miss Conklin were invited to meet the Crown Prince and Princess of Norland upon the following afternoon between the hours of four and seven.

"At last," murmured the widow of a carpet-bagger.

But Cynthia groaned aloud.

"We can't go. This card ought to have reached us last Wednesday week."

"A pardonable oversight. You will wear your hand-painted *crêpe de Chine*, and the cloak and hat to match."

"I won't go."

"Don't be absurd. Things have turned out according to plan. I'm not a fool, and I hope that I'm not the mother of a fool. At a glance I could see that His Royal Highness was interested in you."

"Mother!"

"Your dear father spent thousands to get what he called publicity. We have got it for nothing. I look forward to seeing your photograph in the next *Prattler*."

"You will be disappointed. I simply can't go. If you admit that you fished for this card, it makes matters worse. I'm not a child; I'm twenty-three. For seven years we have been ignored by these swells. And why not? I suppose even dukes and duchesses have a perfect right to choose their own friends. We do know some very pleasant people."

Mrs. Conklin said with apparent irrelevance:—

"Next year we shall have tickets for the enclosure at Ascot. You wanted to go without them. How right I was to insist on our staying away! Everything comes to those who know how to wait. Take this card, put it upon your dressing-table——"

"So that the servants may see it."

"That is a very vulgar remark."

"It is," assented Cynthia. "Perhaps this is a vulgar action."

She took the card from her mother, and tore it up viciously.

"That's that," she observed.

Mrs. Conklin attempted expostulation, coaxing, and finally more autocratic methods. But a modern miss was not to be budged from an impregnable position. The card had come too late. It did signify—publicity. And probably—ridicule. A sense of humour saved Cynthia from the ignominy of tears.

"To-morrow afternoon," she declared, "I shall cool myself in the pool."

At the last moment Cynthia did not change her mind. Mrs. Conklin rolled off in her Rolls-Royce. Her daughter said laughingly: "Good hunting, mother!" Then she slipped into a last year's frock and betook herself to the bathing hut.

IV.

THE hut brought confoundingly to mind a distinguished intruder and trespasser. Cynthia had no taint of snobbery, still the conviction that she had "interested" a Royal Highness thrilled. She made herself a cup of tea and drank it slowly in maiden meditation, trying hard to envisage a dual personality. If—if this photographer had been an ordinary man, and if the card to the ducal party had arrived, as it did, belatedly, would she have refused so peremptorily to accompany her mother? Reluctantly, she decided that she wouldn't—she would have gone. Back of her mind was the dread of meeting the Crown Prince. The gulf between them couldn't be bridged, even in fancy.

She had liked him; he had liked her.

Being a practical young woman she consoled herself with the reflection that a great personage would be "nice" to her mother. And others, the swells, would govern themselves accordingly. The Duchess, later on, might ask Mrs. Conklin to luncheon. Poor mother! What balm that would be!

Cynthia washed up her tea-things and glanced at her wrist-watch. It was past five; she had eaten a light tea. It would be quite safe to bathe at six, so she undressed leisurely and put on her pretty bathing dress and the cap. Had she been stupid not to go to this great party?

Suddenly she heard a whistle. In a jiffy she had donned a beflowered bath-robe, because she had recognized the whistle.

It was HE. Did royal privileges and prerogatives enable a man to be in two places at the same time? Before she could answer this question, a mere photographer was explaining his presence.

"I have brought the photographs, my dear Narcissa. Your butler told me that I should find you here."

"I am here," replied Cynthia. "But why aren't you *there?*"

"I escaped," he replied, lightly. "I hate these functions. May I ask why *you* weren't there?"

"You saw my mother?"

"I did."

"I can't understand how *you* escaped."

There was the faintest emphasis on the personal pronoun, sufficient—so Cynthia thought—to indicate that an *incognito* had ceased to be such to her. Her visitor, however, whether designedly or not she couldn't determine, picked up friendly acquaintanceship where he had left it. He replied coolly:—

"I did my duty for an hour. May I show you the photographs?"

"Please."

They were beautifully mounted.

"But how quick you have been."

"Oh, well, we must give credit to an underling."

An underling!

Was that a discreet hint to her? He continued in the same cool tone:—

"You are about to bathe. How I envy you! Why didn't I bring a bathing kit?"

By this time, mischief was lurking in Cynthia's active mind and dancing in her eyes. Obviously, this whimsical gentleman expected her to play her part in a joyous little comedy.

"We have a kit in that chest. If you like, you can take it and put it on. You will find towels, too. You can undress at the other end of the pool behind those bushes. I shall jump in and—and swim about till you join me. Can you swim?"

"Can I swim? Can you dive? Let me see Narcissa take a header."

She hesitated. Almost defiantly, she cast from her the beflowered robe, stood still for a second, ran to the board, executed a hop, skip, and a jump—and disappeared. When she emerged, his Royal Highness was clapping his hands.

In less than five minutes he was swimming beside her. He dared to splash her! She splashed him. He challenged her to a race and beat her by a short head. She suspected that he was not putting out his full powers. When he chaffed her, she chaffed back. And so a most beguiling half-hour passed.

V.

WE behold them dressed and greedily devouring the cakes which Cynthia had left untouched at tea. They talked seriously of books and birds. They wandered, hand in hand, so to speak, down the less-frequented paths of life, a delightful vagabondage. Was Narcissa reckless? Cynthia Conklin asked herself that question. Had this stranger cast a spell upon her? Why did she recognize in him the man, not the fairy prince, of her dreams? Obviously, he was a man. He had done things. Cynthia had ever been disdainful of fairy princes a-riding down enchanted glades. And yet, enchantment seemed to have stolen upon her and encompassed the pool, upon whose placid surface dragonflies scintillated.

Suddenly the spell was lifted.

"Aren't you glad," asked the man, "that you didn't go to the party?"

An English miss reassumed drawing-room manners. Her madcap mood passed. She said, stiffly:—

"Of course, you asked the Duchess to send that card?"

"You are mistaken. I happened to

mention where I had been and the names of my two hostesses. The Duchess said: 'How very thoughtless of me! I forgot to send them a card.'"

"Oh-h-h!"

"I was so disappointed when you didn't come. May I ask for the second time why you stayed away?"

"Surely you can guess?"

"But—I can't."

As he spoke he looked her straight in the eyes. It was impossible to accuse him of insincerity or, a much milder word, of dissembling. She could read, too, in his eyes not merely admiration (she was accustomed to that), but something more than liking. A vague distrust of him and of herself stirred within her. It was possible that royalties allowed themselves extraordinary licence.

"You see, I—I know you who are."

"Do you?" he replied, gravely.

"We, mother and I, found your picture in *The Prattler* a few minutes after you left us. Then the card came. It was very kind of you, but I had met you as a man, as I met you again this afternoon. I felt that I couldn't meet a personage."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"A personage? Are there any personages left? We have instead personalities. I should like you to think of me as a personality."

Miss Conklin replied:—

"It is ridiculous, sir, for me to think of you at all."

"Pray don't call me 'sir.'"

She remained silent. After a pause, in a gentler tone he went on:—

"For my sins, as I said before, I have to observe the formalities in public. But in private I cast from me such idiotic shackles. Come—let us begin again. Fate ordained that we should be friends. I—I plead for your friendship. We have been happy together. Can you deny that?"

"N-n-no."

"May I come back to-morrow?"

She temporized.

"Why didn't you tell me at once who you were?"

His grey eyes twinkled.

"Wouldn't that have spoilt the fun? Is there so much romance in life that we can afford to flout it when it pops up unexpectedly? Let us be perfectly honest with each other."

She retorted, bravely:—

"But it was not quite honest of you to pretend to be a photographer."

"Let my work as a photographer answer that." He pointed to the photographs. "Do you think that gold medals are awarded to amateurs?"

"You have made it so difficult for me to think at all."

"But that is the greatest compliment I have ever received. My precious medal is dross. If I were a vain man——"

"Aren't you?"

"Certainly not."

Cynthia frowned. If royalties elected to travel at excess speed, they must pay the penalty. She said, acidly:—

"Perhaps you have been given a gold medal for supreme proficiency in the art of saying what you don't mean."

He frowned in his turn.

"My worst enemy has never accused me of that. May I light a cigarette?"

As he lit it, she contemplated flight. It was against etiquette to dismiss summarily this importunate prince, but she might plead an excuse for leaving him. The feeblest of excuses left her lips.

"I have some letters to write."

"Dear Narcissa, will you write to me?"

Futile rage tore discretion to tatters. She jumped up, quivering.

"Am I to address them care of the Crown Princess of Norland?"

"A waste of ink. They would reach me without that."

She curtsied.

"I have the honour, sir, to wish you—good night."

"Good afternoon, Miss Conklin. I hope to have the honour of wishing you good morning—to-morrow."

She had the last sprightly word.

"We have been playing together, sir, in—shall we call it a castle in Spain? In Spain to-morrow never comes."

With that Narcissa fled.

VI.

MRS. CONKLIN reached home in time to dress for dinner after three hours of linked sweetness long drawn out. Mother and daughter met in the drawing-room.

"I have enjoyed, child, a triumph."

"Dear mother, I am so glad."

"Yes. Really, I feel almost dithered with excitement. I talked alone with the Crown Princess for five minutes. The Duchess was kindness itself. The Duke spoke about our covert shooting. *And the whole county looked on.* Really, I could almost sing my '*Nunc dimittis.*' And all this civility and courtesy I owe to the Crown Prince."

"Ah! The Crown Prince. You saw him?"

"My dear, he is coming here to-morrow. It is arranged."

"He likes our lemonade."

Mrs. Conklin laughed.

"Cynthia, I made the most absurd mis-

take, but it led to my triumph. The man in *The Prattler* picture, whom I took to be the Crown Prince, is his great friend, Oscar Fridhoff, the famous naturalist. He was there. I went up to him and curtsied. I addressed him as your Royal Highness. In that picture the real Crown Prince is standing *between* our King and Queen. When I discovered my mistake I need hardly tell you that I was overwhelmed with confusion. The Crown Prince made a joke of it. He said: 'Madame, you have curtsied to the right man.' Everybody in the charmed circle laughed. Finally, I laughed myself. Well, child, it seems that Mr. Fridhoff——"

"*Mister* Fridhoff?"

"He appears to have no title."

"He doesn't need one," murmured Cynthia.

"What was I about to say? Yes—Fridhoff—they all call him Fridhoff, or Oscar—Fridhoff had told the Crown Prince about our herbaceous borders. To-morrow, at eleven, Fridhoff is bringing the Crown Prince to see them. After all, you will wear your *crêpe de Chine*."

"I think I will," said Cynthia.

"And now, child, prepare yourself for the greatest surprise of all. This Fridhoff must have spoken to the Crown Princess of you."

"Of me?"

"Of you. Her Royal Highness has expressed a wish to meet you. We lunch at the Castle the day after to-morrow."

"Mother——! You make me dizzy. Aren't we all travelling too fast?"

Mrs. Conklin replied augustly:—

"Royalty sets it own pace."

"Did—did Mr. Fridhoff pay you any attention?"

"He disappeared. I hardly spoke to him after our first comical meeting. I cannot understand his leaving such a very distinguished gathering; can you?"

Cynthia blushed.

"Mr. Fridhoff and I bathed together in our pool."

"Good gracious! What next?"

"At the pace we are going," said Cynthia, "that question may be answered—to-morrow."

And it was.

ACROSTICS.

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THE simple joys of Christmastide
Acrostic themes may well provide.
The former? Pull one, and mayhap
A ring rewards you, or a cap.
The latter? Happiness is met
By those who give, and those who get.

1. Mix up a fruit, it is not dear.
2. Your breakfast bacon should be here.
3. A Queen of England, now long dead.
4. A King of England lost his head.
5. Cattle, a little more than kin.
6. Odd number, play the game, and win.
7. Ponder, what does the mirror do?
8. Letters are six, and blades are two.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 149 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on December 10th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 148.

Two well-known places, one on either side,
Both of them English, here can be descried.
Trade will recall one subject for our rhymes,
The other name will tell of Roman times.

1. If, meaning part, 'tis fair the whole to say,
Write Middlesex, with Surrey sent away.
2. Add head and tail to this and quadruped:
Two synonyms of equal length are read.
3. Divide a biscuit; this, if rightly done,
Should give the word you want, and with it one.
4. Whole played a part in famous tragedy;
The central third is all that here we see.
5. Take one from one, and write what then remains;
Contingency, we notice, it contains.
6. A life was saved by woman's love and wit.
Hood should supply a key to solving it.
7. Observe the capitals, an upright pair.
Now there is little more than ruins there.
8. Beef (may we say?) was high, Laughter was heard,
'Twas then Romance was born—and this occurred.
9. The idler's home, on which depends the race.
One letter island here has out of place.
10. First choose, then change the head of Spanish town.
Lastly, her other, longer, name write down.

PAX.

1. B	ri	D
2. I	j	O
3. R	ive	R
4. K	er	C
5. E	vent	H
6. N	ithsdal	E
7. H	eliopoli	S
8. E	lopemen	T
9. A	tmospher	E
10. D	emete	R

NOTES.—Light 1. Bridewell, Ewell. 2. Bijou, jewel. 3. Rive rusk, River Usk. 4. Handkerchief. Othello. 5. Seventh, event. 6. Lady Nithsdale, in 1715; a hood. 7. Heliopolis, also called On. The two capital letters in the couplet. 8. The dish ran away with the spoon. 9. Argon, idler. Patmos here. 10. Xeres, Ceres.

"Bellona" is accepted for the third light of No. 146.

Buttercup Day

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

"LADDIE," said Ukridge, "I need capital, old horse—need it sorely."

He removed his glistening silk hat, looked at it in a puzzled way, and replaced it on his head. We had met by chance near the eastern end of Piccadilly, and the breath-taking gorgeousness of his costume told me that, since I had seen him last, there must have occurred between him and his aunt Julia one of those periodical reconciliations which were wont to punctuate his hectic and disreputable career. For those who know Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge, that much-enduring man, are aware that he is the nephew of Miss Julia Ukridge, the wealthy and popular novelist, and that from time to time, when she can bring herself to forgive and let bygones be bygones, he goes to dwell for awhile in gilded servitude at her house in Wimbledon.

"Yes, Corky, my boy, I want a bit of capital."

"Oh?"

"And want it quick. The truest saying in this world is that you can't accumulate if you don't speculate. But how the deuce are you to start speculating unless you accumulate a few quid to begin with?"

"Ah," I said, non-committally.

"Take my case," proceeded Ukridge, running a large, beautifully gloved finger round the inside of a spotless collar which appeared to fit a trifle too snugly to the neck. "I have an absolutely safe double for Kempton Park on the fifteenth, and even a modest investment would bring me in several hundred pounds. But bookies, blast them, require cash down in advance, so where am I? Without capital, enterprise is strangled at birth."

"Can't you get some from your aunt?"

"Not a cent. She is one of those women who simply do not disgorge. All her surplus cash is devoted to adding to her collection of mouldy snuff-boxes. When I look at those snuff-boxes and reflect that any single one of them, judiciously put up the spout, would set my feet on the road to Fortune, only my innate sense of honesty keeps me from pinching them."

"You mean they're locked up?"

"It's hard, laddie. Very hard and bitter and ironical. She buys me suits. She buys me hats. She buys me boots. She buys me spats. And, what is more, insists on my wearing the damned things. With what result? Not only am I infernally uncomfortable, but my exterior creates a totally false impression in the minds of any blokes I meet to whom I may happen to owe a bit of money. When I go about looking as if I owned the Mint, it becomes difficult to convince them that I am not in a position to pay them their beastly one pound fourteen and eleven, or whatever it is. I tell you, laddie, the strain has begun to weigh upon me to such an extent that the breaking-point may arrive at any moment. Every day it is becoming more imperative that I clear out and start life again upon my own. But this cannot be done without cash. And that is why I look around me and say to myself: 'How am I to acquire a bit of capital?'"

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I thought it best to observe at this point that my own circumstances were extremely straitened. Ukridge received the information with a sad, indulgent smile.

"I was not dreaming of biting your ear, old horse," he said. "What I require is something far beyond your power to supply. Five pounds at least. Or three, anyway. Of course, if, before we part, you think fit to hand over a couple of bob or half a crown as a small temporary——"

He broke off with a start, and there came into his face the look of one who has perceived snakes in his path. He gazed along the street; then, wheeling round, hurried abruptly down Church Place.

"One of your creditors?" I asked.

"Girl with flags," said Ukridge, briefly. A peevish note crept into his voice. "This modern practice, laddie, of allowing females with trays of flags and collecting-boxes to flood the Metropolis is developing into a scourge. If it isn't Rose Day it's Daisy Day, and if it isn't Daisy Day it's Pansy Day. And though now, thanks to a bit of quick thinking, we have managed to escape without——"

At this moment a second flag-girl, emerging from Jermyn Street, held us up with a brilliant smile, and we gave till it hurt—which, in Ukridge's case, was almost immediately.

"And so it goes on," he said bitterly. "Sixpence here, a shilling there. Only last Friday I was touched for twopence at my very door. How can a man amass a huge fortune if there is this constant drain on his resources? What was that girl collecting for?"

"I didn't notice."

"Nor did I. One never does. For all we know, we may have contributed to some cause of which we heartily disapprove. And that reminds me, Corky, my aunt is lending her grounds on Tuesday for a bazaar in aid of the local Temperance League. I particularly wish you to put aside all other engagements and roll up."

"No, thanks. I don't want to meet your aunt again."

"You won't meet her. She will be away. She's going North on a lecturing tour."

"Well, I don't want to come to any bazaar. I can't afford it."

"Have no fear, laddie. There will be no expense involved. You will pass the entire afternoon in the house with me. My aunt, though she couldn't get out of lending these people her grounds, is scared that, with so many strangers prowling about, somebody might edge in and sneak her snuff-boxes. So I am left on guard, with instructions not to stir out till they've all gone. And a very wise precaution, too. There is absolutely nothing which blokes whose passions have been inflamed by constant ginger-beer will stick at. You will share my vigil. We will smoke a pipe or two in the study, talk of this and that, and it may be that, if we put our heads together, we shall be able to think up a scheme for collecting a bit of capital."

"Oh, well, in that case——"

"I shall rely on you. And now, if I don't want to be late, I'd better be getting along. I'm lunching with my aunt at Prince's."

He gazed malevolently at the flag-girl, who had just stopped another pedestrian, and strode off.

HEATH HOUSE, Wimbledon, the residence of Miss Julia Ukridge, was one of that row of large mansions which face the Common, standing back from the road in the seclusion of spacious grounds. On any normal day, the prevailing note of the place would have been a dignified calm; but when I arrived on the Tuesday afternoon a vast and unusual activity was in progress. Over the gates there hung large banners advertising the bazaar, and through these gates crowds of people were passing. From somewhere in the interior of the garden came the brassy music of a merry-go-round. I added myself to the throng, and was making for the front door when a silvery voice spoke in my ear, and I was aware of a very pretty girl at my elbow.

"Buy a buttercup?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Buy a buttercup?"

I then perceived that, attached to her person with a strap, she carried a tray containing a mass of yellow paper objects.

"What's all this?" I inquired, automatically feeling in my pocket.

She beamed upon me like a high priestess initiating some favourite novice into a rite.

"Buttercup Day," she said winningly.

A man of greater strength of mind would, no doubt, have asked what Buttercup Day was, but I have a spine of wax. I produced the first decent-sized coin on which my fumbling fingers rested, and slipped it into her box. She thanked me with a good deal of fervour and pinned one of the yellow objects in my buttonhole.

The interview then terminated. The girl flitted off like a sunbeam in the direction of a prosperous-looking man who had just gone by, and I went on to the house, where I found Ukridge in the study gazing earnestly through the French windows which commanded a view of the grounds. He turned as I entered; and, as his eye fell upon the saffron ornament in my coat, a soft smile of pleasure played about his mouth.

A flag-girl held us up with a brilliant smile.

"I see you've got one," he said.

"Got what?"

"One of those thingummies."

"Oh, these? Yes. There was a girl with a tray of them in the front garden. It's Buttercup Day. In aid of something or other, I suppose."

"It's in aid of me," said Ukridge, the soft smile developing into a face-splitting grin.

"What do you mean?"

"Corky, old horse," said Ukridge, motioning me to a chair, "the great thing in this world is to have a good, level business head. Many men in my position, wanting capital and not seeing where they were going to get it, would have given up the struggle as a bad job. Why? Because they lacked Vision and the big, broad, flexible outlook. But what did I do? I sat down and thought. And after many hours of concentrated meditation I was rewarded with an idea. You remember that painful affair in Jermyn Street the other day—when that female bandit got into our ribs? You recall that neither of us knew what we had coughed up our good money for?"

"Well?"

"Well, laddie, it suddenly flashed upon me like an inspiration from above that nobody ever does know what they are coughing up for when they meet a girl with a tray of flags. I hit upon the great truth, old horse—one of the profoundest truths in this modern civilization of ours—that any given man, confronted by a pretty girl with a tray of flags, will automatically and without inquiry shove a coin into her box. So I got hold of a girl I know—a dear little soul, full of beans—and arranged for her to come here this afternoon. I confidently anticipate a clean-up on an impressive scale. The outlay on the pins and bits of paper was practically nil, so there is no overhead and all that comes in will be pure velvet."

A strong pang shot through me.

"Do you mean to say," I demanded with feeling, "that that half-crown of mine goes into your beastly pocket?"

"Half of it. Naturally my colleague and partner is in on the division. Did you really give half a crown?" said Ukridge, pleased. "It was like you, laddie. Generous to a fault. If everyone had your lavish disposition, this world would be a better, sweeter place."

"I suppose you realize," I said, "that in about ten minutes at the outside your colleague and partner, as you call her, will be arrested for obtaining money under false pretences?"

"Not a chance."

"After which, they will—thank God!—proceed to pinch you."

"Quite impossible, laddie. I rely on my

knowledge of human psychology. What did she say when she stung you ? "

" I forget. ' Buy a buttercup ' or something."

" And then ? "

" Then I asked what it was all about, and she said ' Buttercup Day.' "

" Exactly. And that's all she will need to say to anyone. Is it likely, is it reasonable to suppose, that even in these materialistic days Chivalry has sunk so low that any man will require to be told more, by a girl as pretty as that, than that it is Buttercup Day ? " He walked to the window and looked out. " Ah ! She's come round into the back garden," he said, with satisfaction. " She seems to be doing a roaring trade. Every second man is wearing a buttercup. She is now putting it across a curate, bless her heart."

" And in a couple of minutes she will probably try to put it across a plain-clothes detective, and that will be the end."

Ukridge eyed me reproachfully.

" You persist in looking on the gloomy side, Corky. A little more of the congratulatory attitude is what I could wish to see in you, laddie. You do not appear to realize that your old friend's foot is at last on the ladder that leads to wealth. Suppose—putting it at the lowest figure—I net four pounds out of this buttercup business. It goes on Caterpillar in the two o'clock selling race at Kempton. Caterpillar wins, the odds being—let us say—ten to one. Stake and winnings go on Bismuth for the Jubilee Cup, again at ten to one. There you have a nice, clean four hundred pounds of capital, ample for a man of keen business sense to build a fortune on. For, between ourselves, Corky, I have my eye on what looks like the investment of a lifetime."

" Yes ? "

" Yes. I was reading about it the other day. A cat ranch out in America."

" A cat ranch ? "

" That's it. You collect a hundred thousand cats. Each cat has twelve kittens a year. The skins range from ten cents each for the white ones to seventy-five for the pure black. That gives you twelve million skins per year to sell at an average price of thirty cents per skin, making your annual revenue at a conservative estimate three hundred and sixty thousand dollars. But, you will say, what about overhead expenses ? "

" Will I ? "

" That has all been allowed for. To feed the cats you start a rat ranch next door. The rats multiply four times as fast as cats, so if you begin with a million rats it gives you four rats per day per cat, which is plenty. You feed the rats on what is left over of the cats after removing the skins, allowing one-fourth of a cat per rat, the business thus becoming automatically self-supporting. The cats will eat the rats, the rats will eat the cats——"

There was a knock upon the door.

" Come in," bellowed Ukridge, irritably. These captains of industry hate to be interrupted when in conference.

It was the butler who had broken in upon his statistics.

" A gentleman to see you, sir," said he.

" Who is he ? "

" He did not give his name, sir. He is a gentleman in Holy Orders."

" Not the vicar ? " cried Ukridge, in alarm.

" No, sir. The gentleman is a curate. He inquired for Miss Ukridge. I informed him that Miss Ukridge was absent, but that you were on the premises, and he then desired to see you, sir."

" Oh, all right," said Ukridge, resignedly. " Show him in. Though we are running grave risks, Corky," he added, as the door closed. " These curates frequently have subscription lists up their sleeves and are extremely apt, unless you are very firm, to soak you for a donation to the Church Organ Fund or something. Still, let us hope——"

THE door opened, and our visitor entered. He was a rather small size in curates, with an engaging, ingenuous face, adorned with a pair of pince-nez. He wore a paper buttercup in his coat ; and, directly he began to speak, revealed himself as the possessor of a peculiar stammer.

" Pup-pup-pup—— " he said.

" Eh ? " said Ukridge.

" Mr. pup-pup-pup Ukridge ? "

" Yes. This is my friend, Mr. Corcoran."

I bowed. The curate bowed.

" Take a seat," urged Ukridge, hospitably. " You'll have a drink ? "

The visitor raised a deprecatory hand.

" No, thank you," he replied. " I find it more beneficial to my health to abstain entirely from alcoholic liquids. At the University I was a moderate drinker, but since I came down I have found it better to pup-pup-pup completely. But pray do not let me stop you. I am no bigot."

He beamed for an instant in friendly fashion ; then there came into his face a look of gravity. Here was a man, one perceived, who had something on his mind.

" I came here, Mr. Ukridge," he said, " on a pup-pup-pup-pup-pup——"

" Parish matter ? " I hazarded, to help him out.

He shook his head.

" No, a pup-pup-pup——"

"Pleasure-trip?" suggested Ukridge.

He shook his head again.

"No, a pup-pup-pup uncongenial errand. I understand that Miss Ukridge is absent and that you, as her nephew, are, therefore, the presiding genius, if I may use the expression, of these pup-pup-pup festivities."

"Eh?" said Ukridge, fogged.

"I mean that it is to you that complaints should be made."

"Complaints?"

"Of what is going on in Miss Ukridge's garden—one might say under her *imprimatur*."

Ukridge's classical education had been cut short by the fact that at an early age he had unfortunately been expelled from the school of which in boyhood's days we had been fellow-members, and Latin small-talk was not his forte. This one passed well over his head. He looked at me plaintively, and I translated.

"He means," I said, "that your aunt lent her grounds for this binge and so has a right to early information about any rough stuff that is being pulled on the premises."

"Exactly," said the curate.

"But, dash it, laddie," protested Ukridge, now abreast of the situation, "it's no good complaining of anything that happens at a charity bazaar. You know as well as I do that, when the members of a Temperance League get together and start selling things at stalls, anything goes except gouging and biting. The only thing to do is to be light on your feet and keep away."

The curate shook his head sadly,

"I have no complaint to make concerning the manner in which the stalls are being conducted, Mr. pup-pup-pup. It is only to be expected that at a bazaar in aid of a deserving cause the prices of the various articles on sale will be in excess of those charged in the ordinary marts of trade. But deliberate and calculated swindling is another matter."

"Swindling?"

"There is a young woman in the grounds extorting money from the public on the plea that it is Buttercup Day. And here is the point, Mr. Ukridge. There is no such thing as Buttercup Day. This young person is deliberately cheating the public."

Ukridge licked his lips, with a hunted expression.

"Probably a local institution," I suggested.

"That's it," said Ukridge gratefully. "Just what I was going to say myself. Probably a local institution. Fresh Air Fund for the poor of the neighbourhood, I shouldn't wonder. I believe I've heard them talk about it, now I come to think."

The curate refused to consider the theory.

"No," he said. "If that had been so the young woman would have informed me. In answer to my questions, her manner was evasive and I could elicit no satisfactory reply. She merely smiled and repeated the words 'Buttercup Day.' I feel that the police should be called in."

"The police!" gurgled Ukridge, pallidly.

"It is our pup-pup duty," said the curate, looking like a man who writes letters to the press signed "Pro Bono Publico."

Ukridge shot out of his chair with a convulsive bound. He grasped my arm and led me to the door.

"Excuse me," he said. "Corky," he whispered tensely, dragging me out into the passage, "go and tell her to leg it—quick!"

"Right!" I said.

"You will no doubt find a constable in the road," roared Ukridge.

"I bet I will," I replied in a clear carrying voice.

"We can't have this sort of thing going on here," bellowed Ukridge.

"Certainly not," I shouted with enthusiasm.

He returned to the study, and I went forth upon my errand of mercy. I had reached the front door and was about to open it, when it suddenly opened itself, and the next moment I was gazing into the clear blue eyes of Ukridge's aunt Julia.

"Oh—ah—er!" I said.

THERE are certain people in this world in whose presence certain other people can never feel completely at their ease. Notable among the people beneath whose gaze I myself experience a sensation of extreme discomfort and guilt is Miss Julia Ukridge, author of so many widely-read novels and popular after-dinner speaker at the better class of literary reunion. This was the fourth time we had met, and on each of the previous occasions I had felt the same curious illusion of having just committed some particularly unsavoury crime and—what is more—of having done it with swollen hands, enlarged feet, and trousers bagging at the knee on a morning when I had omitted to shave.

I stood and gaped. Although she had no doubt made her entry by the simple process of inserting a latchkey in the front door and turning it, her abrupt appearance had on me the effect of a miracle.

"Mr. Corcoran!" she observed, without pleasure.

"Er——"

"What are you doing here?"

An inhospitable remark; but justified, perhaps, by the circumstances of our previous relations—which had not been of the most agreeable.

"I came to see—er—Stanley."

"Oh?"

"He wanted me with him this afternoon."

"Indeed?" she said; and her manner suggested surprise at what she evidently considered a strange and even morbid taste on her nephew's part.

"I thought—we thought—we both thought you were lecturing up North."

"When I arrived at the club for luncheon I found a telegram postponing my visit," she condescended to explain. "Where is Stanley?"

"In your study."

"I will go there. I wish to see him."

I began to feel like Horatius at the Bridge. It seemed to me that, foe of the human race though Ukridge was in so many respects, it was my duty as a lifelong friend to prevent this woman winning through to him until that curate was well out of the way. I have a great belief in woman's intuition, and I was convinced that, should Miss Julia Ukridge learn that there was a girl in her grounds selling paper buttercups for a non-existent charity, her keen intelligence would leap without the slightest hesitation to the fact of her nephew's complicity in the disgraceful affair. She had had previous experience of Ukridge's financial methods.

In this crisis I thought rapidly.

"Oh, by the way," I said. "It nearly slipped my mind. The—er—the man in charge of all this business told me he particularly wanted to see you directly you came back."

"What do you mean by the man in charge of all this business?"

"The fellow who got up the bazaar, you know."

"Do you mean Mr. Prosser, the president of the Temperance League?"

"That's right. He told me he wanted to see you."

"How could he possibly know that I should be coming back?"

"Oh, in case you did, I mean." I had what Ukridge would have called an inspiration from above. "I think he wants you to say a few words."

I doubt if anything else would have shifted her. There came into her eyes, softening their steely glitter for a moment, that strange light which is seen only in the eyes of confirmed public speakers who are asked to say a few words.

"Well, I will go and see him."

SHE turned away, and I bounded back to the study. The advent of the mistress of the house had materially altered my plans for the afternoon. What I proposed to do now was to inform Ukridge of her arrival, advise him to eject the curate with all possible speed, give him my blessing, and then slide quietly and unostentatiously away, without any further formalities of farewell. I am not unduly sensitive, but there had been that in Miss Ukridge's manner at our recent meeting which told me that I was not her ideal guest.

I entered the study. The curate was gone, and Ukridge, breathing heavily, was fast asleep in an arm-chair.

The disappearance of the curate puzzled me for a moment. He was rather an insignificant little man, but not so insignificant that I would not have noticed him if he had passed me while I was standing at the front door. And then I saw that the French windows were open.

It seemed to me that there was nothing to keep me. The strong distaste for this house which I had never lost since my first entry into it had been growing, and now the great open spaces called to me with an imperious voice. I turned softly, and found my hostess standing in the doorway.

"Oh, ah!" I said; and once more was afflicted by that curious sensation of having swelled in a very loathsome manner about the hands and feet. I have observed my hands from time to time during my life and have never been struck by anything particularly hideous about them: but whenever I encounter Miss Julia Ukridge they invariably take on the appearance and proportions of uncooked hams.

"Did you tell me, Mr. Corcoran," said the woman in that quiet, purring voice which must lose her so many friends, not only in Wimbledon but in the larger world outside, "that you saw Mr. Prosser and he said that he wished to speak to me?"

"That's right."

"Curious," said Miss Ukridge. "I find that Mr. Prosser is confined to his bed with a chill and has not been here to-day."

I could sympathize with Mr. Prosser's chills. I felt as if I had caught one myself. I would—possibly—have made some reply, but at this moment an enormous snore proceeded from the arm-chair behind me, and such was my overwrought condition that I leaped like a young ram.

"Stanley!" cried Miss Ukridge, sighting the chair.

Another snore rumbled through the air, competing with the music of the merry-go-round. Miss Ukridge advanced and shook her nephew's arm.

"I think," I said, being in the frame of mind when one does say silly things of that sort, "I think he's asleep."

"Asleep!" said Miss Ukridge briefly.

Her eye fell on the half-empty glass on the table, and she shuddered austerely.

The interpretation which she obviously placed on the matter seemed incredible to me. On the stage and in motion-pictures one frequently sees victims of drink keel over in a state of complete unconsciousness after a single glass, but Ukridge was surely of sterner stuff.

"I can't understand it," I said.

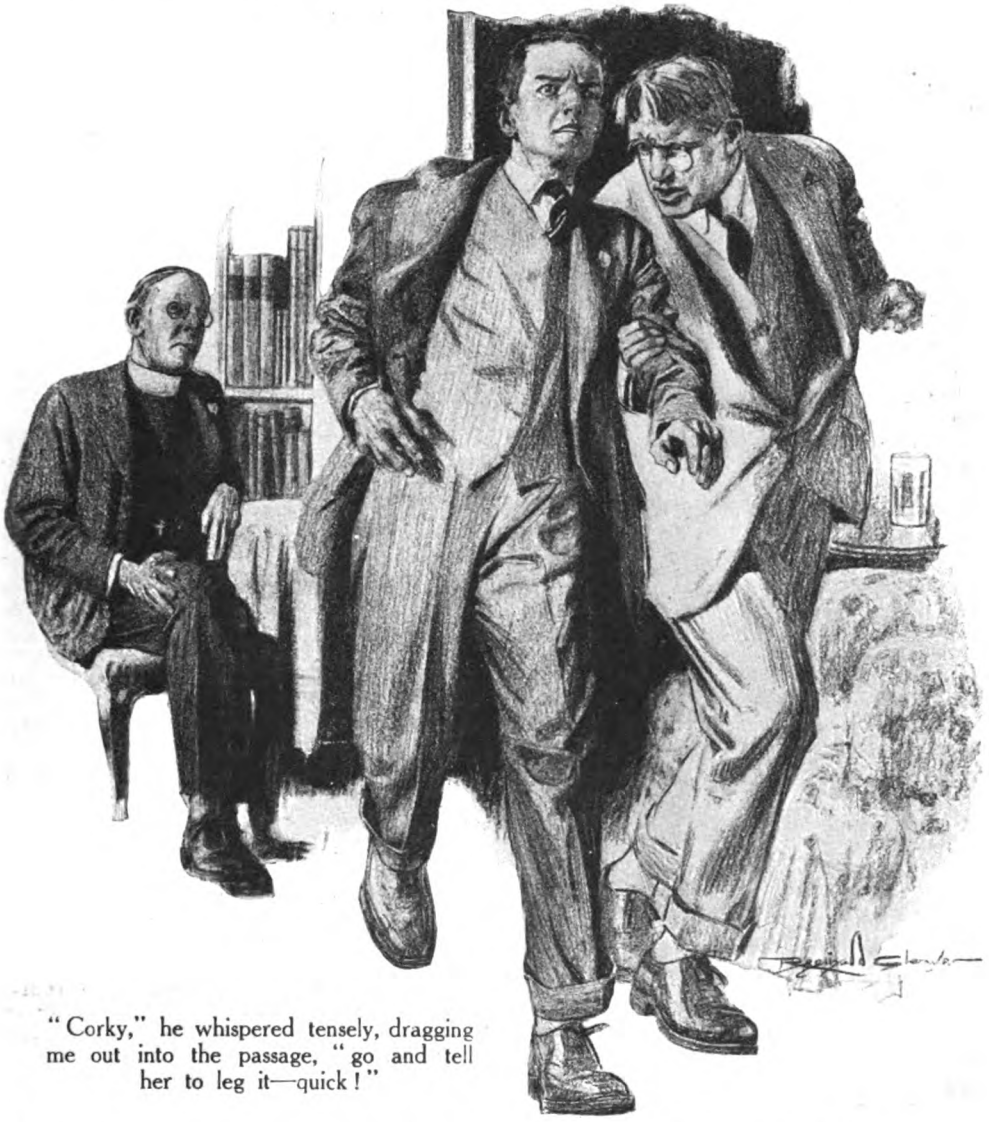
"Indeed!" said Miss Ukridge.

"Why, I have only been out of the room half a minute, and when I left him he was talking to a curate."

"A curate?"

"Absolutely a curate. It's hardly likely, is it, that when he was talking to a curate he would——"

My speech for the defence was cut short by a sudden, sharp noise which, proceeding from immediately behind me, caused me once more to quiver convulsively.



"Corky," he whispered tensely, dragging me out into the passage, "go and tell her to leg it—quick!"

"Well, sir?" said Miss Ukridge.

She was looking past me; and, turning, I perceived that a stranger had joined us. He was standing in the French windows, and the noise which had startled me had apparently been caused by him rapping on the glass with the knob of a stick.

"Miss Ukridge?" said the new-comer.

He was one of those hard faced, keen-eyed men. There clung about him, as he advanced into the room, a subtle air of authority. That he was a man of character and resolution was proved by the fact that he met Miss Ukridge's eye without a tremor.

"I am Miss Ukridge. Might I inquire —— ?"

The visitor looked harder-faced and more keen-eyed than ever.

"My name is Dawson. From the Yard."

"What yard ?" asked the lady of the house, who, it seemed, did not read detective stories.

"Scotland Yard."

"Oh !"

"I have come to warn you, Miss Ukridge," said Mr. Dawson, looking at me as if I were a blood-stain, "to be on your guard. One of the greatest rascals in the profession is hanging about your grounds."

"Then why don't you arrest him ?" demanded Miss Ukridge. The visitor smiled faintly.

"Because I want to get him good," he said.

"Get him good ? Do you mean reform him ?"

"I do not mean reform him," said Mr. Dawson, grimly. "I mean that I want to catch him trying on something worth pulling him in for. There's no sense in taking a man like Stuttering Sam for being a suspected person."

"Stuttering Sam !" I cried, and Mr. Dawson eyed me keenly once more, this time almost as intently as if I had been the blunt instrument with which the murder was committed.

"Eh ?" he said.

"Oh, nothing. Only it's curious——"

"What's curious ?"

"Oh, no, it couldn't be. This fellow was a curate. A most respectable man."

"Have you seen a curate who stuttered ?" exclaimed Mr. Dawson.

"Why, yes. He——"

"Hullo !" said Mr. Dawson. "Who's this ?"

"That," replied Miss Ukridge, eyeing the arm-chair with loathing, "is my nephew Stanley."

"Sound sleeper."

"I prefer not to talk about him."

"Tell me about this curate," said Mr. Dawson, brusquely.

"Well, he came in——"

"Came in ? In here ?"

"Yes."

"Why ?"

"Well——"

"He must have had some story. What was it ?"

I thought it judicious, in the interests of my sleeping friend, to depart somewhat from the precise truth.

"He—er—I think he said something about being interested in Miss Ukridge's collection of snuff-boxes."

"Have you a collection of snuff-boxes, Miss Ukridge ?"

"Yes."

"Where do you keep them ?"

"In the drawing-room."

"Take me there, if you please."

"But I don't understand."

Mr. Dawson clicked his tongue in an annoyed manner. He seemed to be an irritable sleuth-hound.

"I should have thought the thing was clear enough by this time. This man worms his way into your house with a plausible story, gets rid of this gentleman here—— How did he get rid of you ?"

"Oh, I just went, you know. I thought I would like a stroll."

"Oh ? Well, having contrived to be alone with your nephew, Miss Ukridge, he slips knock-out drops in his drink——"

"Knock-out drops ?"

"A drug of some kind," explained Mr. Dawson, chafing at her slowness of intelligence.

"But the man was a curate !"

Mr. Dawson barked shortly.

"Posing as a curate is the thing Stuttering Sam does best. He works the races in that character. Is this the drawing-room ?"

It was. And it did not need the sharp, agonized cry which proceeded from its owner's lips to tell us that the worst had happened. The floor was covered with splintered wood and broken glass.

"They're gone !" cried Miss Ukridge.

IT is curious how differently the same phenomenon can strike different people. Miss Ukridge was a frozen statue of grief. Mr. Dawson, on the other hand, seemed pleased. He stroked his short moustache with an air of indulgent complacency, and spoke of neat jobs. He described Stuttering Sam as a Tough Baby, and gave it as his opinion that the absent one might justly be considered one of the lads and not the worst of them.

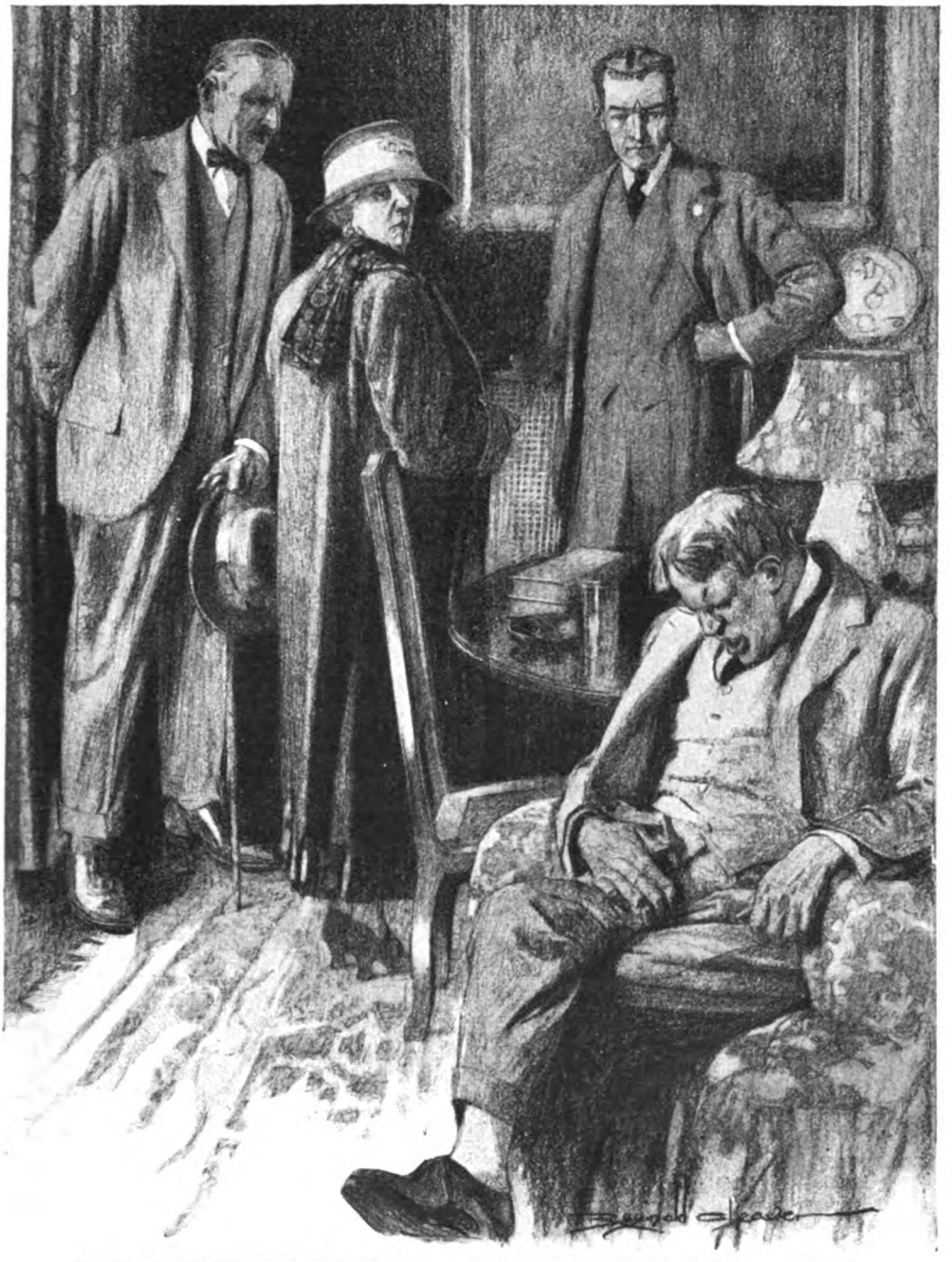
"What shall I do ?" wailed Miss Ukridge. I was sorry for the woman. I did not like her, but she was suffering.

"The first thing to do," said Mr. Dawson, briskly, "is to find out how much the fellow has got away with. Have you any other valuables in the house ?"

"My jewels are in my bedroom."

"Where ?"

"I keep them in a box in the dress-cupboard."



"Hullo!" said Mr. Dawson. "Who's this?"
"That," replied Miss Ukridge, eyeing the arm-chair with loathing, "is my nephew Stanley."

"Well, it's hardly likely that he would find them there, but I'd better go and see. You be taking a look round in here and make a complete list of what has been stolen."

"All my snuff-boxes are gone."

" Well, see if there is anything else missing. Where is your bedroom ? "

" On the first floor, facing the front."

" Right."

Mr. Dawson, all briskness and efficiency, left us. I was sorry to see him go. I had an idea that it would not be pleasant being left alone with this bereaved woman. Nor was it.

" Why on earth," said Miss Ukridge, rounding on me as if I had been a relation, " did you not suspect this man when he came in ? "

" Why, I—he——"

" A child ought to have been able to tell that he was not a real curate."

" He seemed——"

" Seemed ! " She wandered restlessly about the room, and suddenly a sharp cry proceeded from her. " My jade Buddha ! "

" I beg your pardon ? "

" That scoundrel has stolen my jade Buddha. Go and tell the detective."

" Certainly."

" Go on ! What are you waiting for ? "

I fumbled at the handle.

" I don't seem able to get the door open," I explained, meekly.

" Tchah ! " said Miss Ukridge, swooping down. One of the rooted convictions of each member of the human race is that he or she is able without difficulty to open a door which has baffled their fellows. She took the handle and gave it a vigorous tug. The door creaked but remained unresponsive.

" What's the matter with the thing ? " exclaimed Miss Ukridge, petulantly.

" It's stuck."

" I know it has stuck. Please do something at once. Good gracious, Mr. Corcoran, surely you are at least able to open a drawing-room door ? "

It seemed, put in that tone of voice, a feat sufficiently modest for a man of good physique and fair general education ; but I was reluctantly compelled to confess, after a few more experiments, that it was beyond my powers. This appeared to confirm my hostess in the opinion, long held by her, that I was about the most miserable worm that an inscrutable Providence had ever permitted to enter the world.

She did not actually say as much, but she sniffed, and I interpreted her meaning exactly.

" Ring the bell ! "

I rang the bell.

" Ring it again ! "

I rang it again.

" Shout ! "

I shouted.

" Go on shouting ! "

I went on shouting. I was in good voice that day. I shouted " Hi ! " ; I shouted " Here ! " ; I shouted " Help ! " I also shouted in a broad, general way. It was a performance which should have received more than a word of grateful thanks. But all Miss Ukridge said, when I paused for breath, was :—

" Don't whisper ! "

I nursed my aching vocal cords in a wounded silence.

" Help ! " cried Miss Ukridge.

Considered as a shout, it was not in the same class as mine. It lacked body, vim, and even timbre. But, by that curious irony which governs human affairs, it produced results. Outside the door a thick voice spoke in answer

" What's up ? "

" Open this door ! "

The handle rattled.

" It's stuck," said a voice, which I now recognized as that of my old friend, Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge.

" I know it has stuck. Is that you, Stanley ? See what is causing it to stick "

A moment of silence followed. Investigations were apparently in progress without.

" There's a wedge jammed under it."

" Well, take it out at once."

" I'll have to get a knife or something "

ANOTHER interval for rest and meditation succeeded. Miss Ukridge paced the floor with knit brows ; while I sidled into a corner and stood there feeling a little like an inexperienced young animal-trainer who has managed to get himself locked into the lions' den and is trying to remember what Lesson Three of his correspondence course said he ought to do in such circumstances.

Footsteps sounded outside, and then a wrenching and scratching. The door opened and we beheld on the mat Ukridge, with a carving-knife in his hand, looking headachy and dishevelled, and the butler, his professional poise rudely disturbed and his face stained with coal-dust.

It was characteristic of Miss Ukridge that it was to the erring domestic rather than the rescuing nephew that she turned first.

" Baxter," she hissed, as far as a woman, even of her intellectual gifts, is capable of hissing the word " Baxter," " why didn't you come when I rang ? "

" I did not hear the bell, madam. I was——"

" You must have heard the bell."

" No, madam."

" Why not ? "

" Because I was in the coal-cellar, madam."

" What on earth were you doing in the coal-cellar ? "

With a gasping moan Miss Ukridge leaped past him, and we heard her running up the stairs.

" I was induced to go there, madam, by a man. He intimidated me with a pistol. He then locked me in."

" What ! What man ? "

" A person with a short moustache and penetrating eyes. He——"

A raconteur with a story as interesting as his to tell might reasonably have expected to be allowed to finish it, but butler Baxter at this point ceased to grip his audience. With a gasping moan his employer leaped past him, and we heard her running up the stairs.

Ukridge turned to me plaintively.

" What is all this, laddie ? Gosh, I've got a headache. What has been happening ? "

" The curate put knock-out drops in your drink, and then——"

I have seldom seen anyone display such poignant emotion as Ukridge did at that moment.

" The curate ! It's a little hard. Upon my Sam, it's a trifle thick. Corky, old horse, I have travelled all over the world in tramp-steamers and what not. I have drunk in water-front saloons from Monte Video to Cardiff. And the only time anyone has ever succeeded in doctoring the stuff on me it was done in Wimbledon—and by a curate. Tell me, laddie, are all curates like that ? Because, if so——"

" He has also pinched your aunt's collection of snuff-boxes."

"The curate?"

"Yes."

"Golly!" said Ukridge in a low, reverent voice, and I could see a new respect for the Cloth dawning within him.

"And then this other fellow came along—his accomplice, pretending to be a detective—and locked us in and shut the butler in the coal-cellar. And I rather fancy he has got away with your aunt's jewels."

A piercing scream from above rent the air.

"He has," I said, briefly. "Well, old man, I think I'll be going."

"Corky," said Ukridge, "stand by me!"

I shook my head.

"In any reasonable circumstances, yes. But I will not meet your aunt again just now. In a year or so, perhaps, but not now."

Hurrying footsteps sounded on the staircase.

"Good-bye," I said, pushing past and heading for the open. "I must be off. Thanks for a very pleasant afternoon."

MONEY was tight in those days, but it seemed to me next morning that an outlay of twopence on a telephone-call to Heath House could not be considered an unjustifiable extravagance. I was conscious of a certain curiosity to learn at long range what had happened after I had removed myself on the previous afternoon.

"Are you there?" said a grave voice in answer to my ring.

"Is that Baxter?"

"Yes, sir."

"This is Mr. Corcoran. I want to speak to Mr. Ukridge."

"Mr. Ukridge is no longer here, sir. He left perhaps an hour ago."

"Oh? Do you mean left—er—for ever?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh! Thanks."

I rang off: and, pondering deeply, returned to my rooms. I was not surprised to be informed by Bowles, my landlord, that Ukridge was in my sitting-room. It was this storm-tossed man's practice in times of stress to seek refuge with me.

"Hullo, laddie," said Ukridge in a graveyard voice.

"So here you are."

"Here I am."

"She kicked you out?"

Ukridge winced slightly, as at some painful recolleetion.

"Words passed, old horse, and in the end we decided that we were better apart."

"I don't see why she should blame you for what happened."

"A woman like my aunt, Corky, is capable of blaming anybody for anything. And so I start life again, laddie, a penniless man, with no weapons against the great world but my vision and my brain."

I endeavoured to attract his attention to the silver lining.

"You're all right," I said. "You're just where you wanted to be. You have the money which your buttercup girl collected."

A strong spasm shook my poor friend, causing, as always happened with him in moments of mental agony, his collar to shoot off its stud and his glasses to fall from his nose.

"The money that girl collected," he replied, "is not available. It has passed away. I saw her this morning and she told me."

"Told you what?"

"That a curate came up to her in the garden while she was selling those buttercups and—in spite of a strong stammer—put it to her so eloquently that she was obtaining money under false pretences that she gave him the entire takings for his Church Expenses Fund and went home, resolved to lead a better life. Women are an unstable, emotional sex, laddie. Have as little to do with them as possible. And, for the moment, give me a drink, old horse, and mix it fairly strong. These are the times that try men's souls."

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

A SERIES of ARTICLES by CELEBRITIES of TO-DAY describing HOW THEY VIEWED LIFE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS

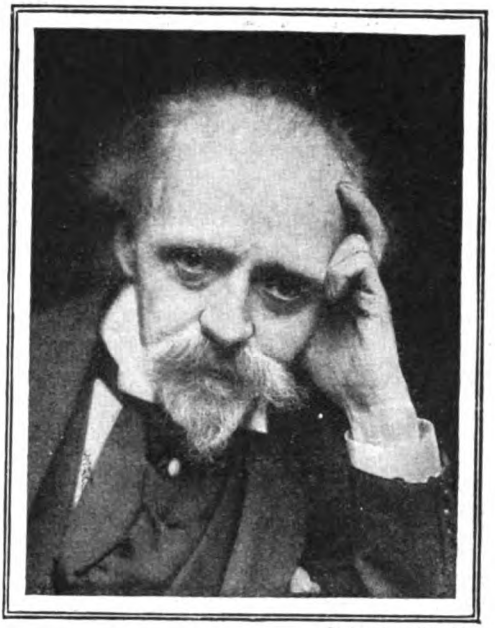


Photo: Caswall Smith.

No. 10

SIR HALL CAINE

AWHILE ago, in conversation with the editor of a literary journal, I chanced to say:—

"I am fairly sure that the best things in a man's novels, however many of them he may write, have their origin in his recollection of events in the first ten or fifteen years of his own life."

In saying this I was by no means thinking of my own doings or tryings-to-do, but of the best in some of the masters of my craft, at home and abroad. Yet now that I am asked by the Editor of THE STRAND MAGAZINE to contribute a chapter to his interesting series of sketches entitled "When I Was Young" I find myself fastening on to my literary dictum, as an excuse to the public and perhaps to my own sense of what it is becoming in any man to say about himself, for certain intimate recollections of events in my childhood, youth, and young manhood, and of the use I have put them to during the many years of my life as a novelist.

I was born on the 14th May, 1853. My father, a powerful, vigorous, and perhaps rather passionate and robustious man, chiefly interested in politics and nearly always on the side of revolt (he would quite certainly be a Labour leader if he were living now), was the son of a small Manx farmer, and his ancestors, as far as I can find trace of them (rather difficult to do where, beyond a certain period, all parish records are lost), had been small Manx farmers for several hundreds of years. They lived on the broad Curragh lands in the somewhat wild north-west of the Isle of Man, with their far view of the Irish Mourne Mountains and the Scottish Mull of Galloway. My mother, a gentle, patient, and devout woman, whose chief interest was in religion, and who left on me through many years, some of them very troubled ones, the feeling that half her heart was in heaven, came of a family of Cumberland Quakers, who, for a long time, were potters in Whitehaven. My parents met in Liverpool and were married there, but by some chance I was born and lived for a few weeks in Runcorn. I have never yet seen my birthplace, but the Runcorn people, who are good enough to take a little interest in it, have sent me a photograph, from which I judge that at the time of my birth it was the home of very humble people. That is all the story of my descent, but it

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would be rash to conclude that I am in any way ashamed of coming, through at least five hundred years, from the aristocracy of the soil.

My earliest recollection is of Peace Day after the Crimean War. Vast and tumultuous crowds had gathered to celebrate the event, on some waste ground near our home, and my father lifted me on to his shoulder to see the Emperor Nicholas burnt in effigy. I thought it was a living man in the flames and I shrieked from terror. That was the first of my many protests against war. I was a little over two years of age at the time.

MY LITTLE MANX GRANDMOTHER.

The story of how I became a novelist takes me back to the time when, as a child of five or thereabouts, I was living off-and-on at intervals in the little thatched cottage on the edge of the Curragh which had been the home of my crofter forefathers. It was then the home of an uncle, an aunt, and my Manx grandmother. My grandmother died when I was still a child, but I remember her as the source of certain superstitious beliefs which still cling to me, and may, for all I know, have contributed to develop the literary faculty.

She was a little Manxwoman, very old and much bent, dressed in the blue home-spun of the island, and occupied with the light labours of the household while the lustier members of the family were at work in the fields. I see her in my mind's eye yet, gathering up the dry gorse that lay about the stack-yard (we called it the "haggard"), and then feeding the fire under the "oven pot" that hung in the "chollagh," the open fireplace, from the "sloughry," a long iron rod and hook over the open hearth. She called me "Hommy-beg," which was Manx for "little Tommy," and I think I must have been much in her company, for I have the clearest memory of stories she told me of fairies and witches and witch-doctors and the evil-eye.

Hall Caine at about the age of six.

She believed in all these most religiously, but, indeed, she believed in every kind of supernatural influence. The earth and the air were full of spiritual things for her, and I suppose some of her simple faith must have fixed itself on the cells of my brain, for, however stubborn the scepticism of my waking hours, in my sleep the superstitions of my childhood are with me still. I cannot remember that she could read, yet she knew much of the Manx Bible by heart, and by some unaccountable sense she could turn up a text at the proper page. She certainly could not write, and one of the miracles of life to her was how I, at five or six years of age, could "read writing."

But she knew a world of things which I did not know and have never been able to learn. She knew when the storms were coming by a look at the sky, and she could tell the time of night by sight of the stars. She knew a bad man, as she knew the clouds, by the sign of trouble on his face, and she could see a good heart through a clear countenance as she saw the stones at the bottom of a well. I think of her as she used to sit on a three-legged stool, feeding the fire with the crackling gorse while she told me wondrous stories of the "little men." And now, after forty-odd years spent in trying to learn the same lore and write it out in books, I tell myself that, bewildered as she would have been to hear it, my old Manx grandmother was a poet.

MY GARIBALDIAN UNCLE.

My Manx uncle was also, in his different way, a somewhat romantic person. In spirit he was as passionate and robustious as my father, although he knew nothing about politics, and in appearance, as I remember him, he bore a strange resemblance to Garibaldi, with his florid face and full brown beard, and wearing, winter and summer (long before the figure of the Italian Liberator could have been known even in England), a pork-pie cap and a red flannel shirt, with a thin gold watch-chain hung around his neck and crossing his breast. Like Shakespeare's father (and probably for the same reason) he united the occupations of farmer and butcher, cultivating some forty or fifty acres, chiefly hilly and hungry and boggy and peaty, and killing the sheep he grazed on the mountain slopes for the insular market. This called for a weekly journey to Douglas, the chief town of our island, and on one of these journeys I, who was his bedfellow, lying in "the loft" a foot or two under the

sweet-smelling "scraas" (the dried turf under the thatch), was permitted, at six or seven years of age, to go with him. And now I do not know that any single event of my childhood had more effect on the work I was afterwards to do—at least, that part of it which concerns the description of Nature.

My uncle was a son of the hills, so, instead of taking a long valley road, we crossed the breast of our highest Manx mountain on the way from our home in the north-west to the market-town on the south-east. We were in an open cart without springs, and a corner was left for me among the carcasses of lambs and the clusters of "plucks" and "heads," while my uncle, in his red shirt, sat on the front board with his feet on one of the shafts. That ascent of Snaefell, and the getting to the top, and then the wilderness of space around, with the sea on every side, and the hills of Scotland, Wales, England, and Ireland in the dim distance north, south, east, and west, and finally the descent into the new world beyond, where our big little town lay far away in the depths below, was a breathless adventure. I suppose it was my baptism as a Nature-lover, and, coming when I was so young, it left a lasting impression. I have crossed many of the great mountain passes of the world since then, but none of them has brought me such a thrilling sense of the vastness of the earth and the mighty things of Nature. And more than once, in later life, when I have had occasion to describe the immensity of mountain country in Asia and Africa, and Europe and America, I have been startled by a sudden consciousness that I have really only been thinking of our humble little mountains and valleys in the Isle of Man as seen through my eyes as a child.

My father lifted me on to his shoulder to see the Emperor Nicholas burnt in effigy. I thought it was a living man and shrieked from terror.

MY SCHOOL-DAYS.

Although so much of childhood and boyhood was spent in the Isle of Man, my real home in my youth, the home of my parents, was in Liverpool. It was there I went to school. My father and mother, although born into the Church of England, were first Methodists and afterwards Baptists, but by another freak of chance, I, who as a man have never been able to belong to any Church except the biggest of all Churches, the Church outside the Churches, was educated as a Unitarian. A group of wealthy members of Dr. James Martineau's Church in Liverpool had founded what was called "The British School," and this became the principal place of my education. One of the masters was the father of Mr. Lloyd George, who was then, I think, living with his family in Liverpool, and as I am some years senior to the statesman, it amuses me to conclude that time was when I was

almost certainly head-boy and chief monitor over the future Prime Minister of England, charged, perhaps, with the duty of controlling him.

A little later, somewhere in my mid-teens, I became a pupil at what was called The Queen's College, an institution affiliated to the University of Cambridge, and permitted to grant a preparatory degree. I took it, to my surprise, by specializing in Greek, a fact which it interests me to recall in view of the lamentable limitation of my knowledge of that subject now, when real acquaintance with it would be of priceless help in my present studies, enabling me to dispense with the aid I am receiving from scholarly and devoted associates.

More important to the rather scrambling education which was all I could then command was the run the Library Committee of Liverpool gave me of their fine library, and surely no young reader ever ran so wild in a wilderness of books. I read everything that interested me, without guidance of any kind—poetry, history, fiction, drama, metaphysics, theology—galloping through all at equal pace, a fresh book almost every other day, until I had more miscellaneous literature on the top of my head than any boy I have ever known or ever wish to know. And that was all my University.

Gladstone listened attentively and then patted me on the top of my head.

GLADSTONE.

When the time came for me to start in life I narrowly escaped a mighty influence which would probably have landed me for the rest of my life in politics. Under the impression that I could draw I answered an advertisement asking for a pupil to an architect. The architect proved to be a remote relation of Gladstone, and through him I came in touch with the statesman. This must have been in 1868, for I have some recollection of running all day long, on the day of the momentous South-West Lancashire election, to his brother's office in Union Court, with telegrams giving the results of the contests all over the country.

I see Gladstone as he was then, sitting behind a table, a tall man in a stiff-looking frock coat of the fashion of a still earlier day, with a pale face and side whiskers and very black hair, thin on the crown and brushed close across his forehead. He was my hero, my idol, but that did not prevent my blurting out the big news of great majorities before he had time to open his telegrams; and then his pale, serious, shadowed face, almost sad, and apparently preoccupied, would lighten to a smile.

I saw Gladstone a little later when he was staying for a while on his estate at Seaforth, which my master had been required to survey for the construction of a road, through pasture land that is now covered by a vast suburb. The surveyor-in-chief had not appeared one morning, and I, the smallest of small boys of fifteen, acting as his deputy, was ordering about two or three big, hulking, indolent chainmen, more than a little under the influence of drink, when Gladstone, then Prime Minister, and paler and graver than before, came out of the vicarage of the parish church, whereof the living was in his gift. He was more amused than I was by my difficulties with the chainmen, and after looking on for a few moments he came up and asked to see my maps and the figures in my survey-book, whereupon I gave him, I remember, an expansive explanation of the imperfections of his estate, with its hedges that ought to be straightened and its by-roads that were badly in need of repair. He listened attentively to his small adviser for a sensible time, and then, not having made any other remark, he patted me on the top of my head—it was easy to do—and said something about my future which I should like to repeat but may not.

I did not expect him to remember me, but a year or two later he sent

word through his brother Robertson that he wished me to become the steward of the Gladstone estates in Lancashire. I declined the offer, being still under the mistaken impression that I had the makings of an architect. But I was sorely tempted to accept it, and I suppose if I had done so, and thus come under the influence of that powerful personality, it might have changed the whole current of my life. Gladstone never forgot me, and after I became known as an author he did me many a good turn at moments when I was badly enough in need of his brave support.

Age 25.

RUSKIN.

My expectation of becoming a great architect was in no way of being fulfilled, for the farthest I got with architecture was to write in the architectural journals a number of rather transcendental articles by way of imitation of Ruskin. That was in the days when Ruskin was quite properly pouring out his tempestuous wrath in torrents of invective such as no other author could command on the vandals who were destroying our ancient buildings. I tried to join him in the crusade, and he encouraged me warmly.

"I have the deepest interest in your work," he wrote, "and *for that reason* must keep wholly out of it in future. I should drive myself mad again in a week if I thought any more of such things. I am doing botany and geology, and you, who are able for it, must fight with rascals and fools."

Ruskin's letters, of which I received many, were an immense joy to me, but in those days I had David Copperfield's fear of being too young, and I was often in terror lest he should find out that I was only a boy.

Years afterwards Ruskin asked me, through his niece, Mrs. Arthur Severn, to visit him at Brantwood on Coniston. I found him old and bent and feeble, a smaller, frailer man than I had looked for, well in health, both in body and mind, but with faculties that were dying down very slowly and almost imperceptibly, as the lamp dies down when the oil fails in it. All the fiery heat of earlier days had by this time gone, all the nervous force as of a fever patient, all the capacity for noble anger and righteous wrath. Nothing was left in him but gentleness, sweetness, and quiet courtesy, the unruffled peace of a breathless evening that is gliding into a silent night.

I think he was glad to see me, for he sat up until eleven o'clock (nine to ten being his usual hour) on the two nights of my visit. I found that his strongest remaining interest was not in art but in social problems, and I pleased him better by telling him that his economic theories were finding followers (who can say how much they have since done to create the Labour Party ?) than that his art views were still discussed. But his interest in great literature, particularly in great fiction, was as keen as ever. His library and living-room (I have a water-colour drawing of it in my home in the Isle of Man) was lined, on the wall behind his chair, with bookshelves which contained many large volumes of Walter Scott's original manuscripts. He took pleasure in showing them to me, and turned over their pages with a tender hand. I thought the handwriting of the later manuscripts resembled Gladstone's, and I tried to prove my opinion by producing a letter which I had just received from the statesman. But Ruskin, whose feeling against Gladstone was intense, would not listen to this for a moment. "No, no, no," he said, with a reddening face.

It was winter time and Coniston Old Man was heavily capped with snow. The walls of Ruskin's little bedroom were covered from ceiling to floor with water-colour drawings by Turner that were gorgeous with the warmth and glow of Venice. The windows looked out on a far different scene—the half-frozen lake and the grey mists of the moorland between. And standing there in the midst of those priceless things, and with the fiery soul beside me, now tempered with age and softened by the joys of home and the love of kindred, I found it difficult to recall without emotion the glorious passage which begins, "Morning dawns as I write." I was at Brantwood again only the other day, when I found everything the same and yet everything different—the great spirit was gone.

KEATS AND FANNY BRAWNE.

Before I found my true vocation I had another narrow escape from a calling for which I was unfit. When I was about

eighteen to twenty-two, a group of young men in Lancashire, some younger, some older than myself, became suddenly seized by the itch for writing verse. I trust I do no wrong to my friends living and dead (especially Sir William Watson, who has since become illustrious as a poet, I think a great one, whose finest work is, in my judgment, clearly marked out for immortality) when I say that our efforts were mainly imitative of the literary gods of our idolatry. Mine were at all events, and my demigod at that time was Keats. As a consequence I wrote a very long blank-verse poem, which I assumed to be in the manner of "Hyperion," and published it in a magazine that was specially established to give it to the world—one of our youthful band having lately come into his inheritance, which was bad for the fortune and not good for the boy, but decidedly stimulating to our literary ambitions. I think that magazine must have been quite alone of its kind. We struck off ten thousand, I remember, but I never heard of anybody buying a copy. I sent one to Gilfillan, who was the great literary critic of the time, and the good old man wrote me a letter about my own contribution which set me walking on the stars. But nobody else has ever told me that he has seen that blank-verse poem of mine, and I doubt if anybody ever will.

This was my first plunge into literature, and it proved to be a plunge into cold water (hot enough for the boy capitalist, perhaps), but during the two or three years succeeding I wrote a great quantity of verse, chiefly sonnets, whereof a certain number were published in *The Athenæum*, at that period the Valhalla of all sonneteers.

Lady Hall Caine at about the time of her marriage.

I cannot say that I had any particular encouragement as a poet, but nevertheless my verse-making was the first thing to bring me into the circle of literary life. One day I heard that H. A. Bright was looking for me. Bright was a Liverpool shipowner, but also an author, being known as the writer of a charming book entitled "A Year in a Lancashire Garden," but more particularly as the intimate friend of Hawthorne in the days when the author of "The Scarlet Letter" was American Consul in Liverpool, and as the "H. A. B." of Hawthorne's published letters. Having found my address in Liverpool, a rather humble one, Bright wrote to say that Lord Houghton, who was coming to visit him, had requested that "a young man named Caine, understood to be living in Liverpool," should be invited to meet him, so I was asked to dinner.

Lord Houghton, the Monckton Milnes of literary history, the father of the present Marquess of Crewe and the friend of Tennyson, Hallam, Macaulay, and other immortals, had the reputation of being the Mæcenas of budding authors, therefore (although I had not got a dress coat, I remember) I was nothing loath to avail myself of my opportunity. I found Houghton a ripe old gentleman, with no apparent enthusiasms, but with a vast fund of *ana* of the great writers whom he had known. He seemed to have known everybody, and listening to him in my feverish youth I felt like the speaker in Browning's poem :—

> *"And did you once see Shelley plain?*
> *And did he stop and speak to you?"*

I turned the talk on Keats in relation to his recently published "Love Letters," and then Houghton told me a story of Fanny Brawne (Keats's sweetheart) which has never, I think, been printed, but may be of interest now that an effort is being made to show that Keats was wrong when, dying in Rome, it added to the "bitterness of heart," which is recorded on his tombstone, to believe that Fanny had never really loved him. Houghton's story (which is fresh in my memory) was this. Somewhere in the mid-'forties he conceived the idea of writing a Life of Shelley, and on the way to Rome in search of material he broke his journey at Florence to visit Walter Savage Landor. Having told his host what he intended to do, Landor, with

characteristic ferocity, cried, "Why on earth are you going to write any more about that fellow, when a greater poet has hardly been written about at all?" "Who in the world is that?" asked Houghton. "Why, Keats—John Keats." Down to that moment Houghton knew little more about Keats than that Shelley had written a marvellously beautiful elegy and a still more beautiful prose note upon him. But after that outburst and some further inquiry he went on to Rome and gathered up the remaining local information about the poet's life and death in that little apartment off the steps of the Piazza de Spagna—how, with Joseph Severn, his devoted friend, he was near to starvation when he died, and how the Roman authorities, quite properly as we now see, came in after his death and carried away his bed to burn it. And then, returning to England, Houghton obtained other material from the poet's surviving friend, Charles Armitage Brown, and finally discovered and interviewed Fanny Brawne.

Hall Caine's mother and father—a photograph taken in front of Greeba Castle.

This was about twenty-five to thirty years after Keats's death, and Fanny had become a comfortable, middle-aged lady who had married and had children, who were also married and had children of their own. She was scarcely pleased to be cross-questioned about Keats, who had not yet come into his own, and about Houghton's obvious impression that she had never realized that she had once had one of the gods of the earth at her feet. And when a grandchild, who was standing by her side, hearing repeated mention of Keats's name, said, "John Keats? Who was John Keats, grandmamma?" she replied:—

"Hush, my child—a foolish young poet who thought he was in love with me."

I tell the story as Lord Houghton told it to me, about fifty years ago, and I leave it at that.

ROSSETTI.

How, at length, after years of futile searching, I came upon my true vocation I have told at sufficient length, for whatever it may be worth, in one of my books, therefore I need only mention it here. At twenty-five years of age I had made the acquaintance of Rossetti, and a year later I had persuaded him to come up to the Vale of St. John, in Cumberland, where I was renting a part of a small farmhouse, wherein his memory (as I was happy to see the other day) is still fresh and vivid. He was then at the beginning of his last illness, and during the dark evenings of autumn, often extending far into the night and sometimes into the dawn, with the sleeping hills about us, and no sound in the still air but the monotonous plash of the waters of the Ghyll behind the farmstead, I read aloud to the sleepless man nearly all the great fiction of the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. It was an education in itself to read Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Scott to that clear and searching intellect; and when we talked about other stories, and I told some that had come up to me from my childhood in my native island, Rossetti saw, what I should have seen myself, that if I had any natural gift at all it was not that of the poet but of the story-teller, and perhaps of the writer of what he (who was generous to nearly everybody and more than generous to me) called "impassioned prose."

This sent me back with a rush of new interest to my memories of the Isle of Man, for I had all along kept in touch with it, not only through the cottage on the Curragh, but also through a schoolhouse on the top of the wild headland of Maughold, where, for a long winter, when I was a youth of eighteen, I had been schoolmaster during the illness and after the death of an uncle.

Hall Caine's birthplace in Runcorn.

My island, like Prospero's, was full of strange sights and sounds, and although I knew that a magician was already there, my friend, T. E. Brown (a poet of true and perhaps great genius), I thought there was material enough for me also, working in another medium and having a different quest. But it was not until a year or two later that I could afford to write my first full-length novel.

MY JOURNALISTIC DAYS.

Not long after Rossetti's death, having little enough to live upon myself, I did what most young men of my temperament do—married a wife to help me live on it. This required that I should hold on for a time to the surer earnings of journalism, so I wrote reviews for *The Athenæum* and *The Academy*, occasional articles for *The Times*, and a daily leader for *The Liverpool Mercury*. I valued the last-mentioned occupation most because it enabled me to practise the art in which I was then (and perhaps have always been) an apprentice. The greater provincial newspapers in those days used to publish three leading articles daily, the first on imperial politics, the second on local politics, and the third on social affairs, and they were all rather grey and ponderous. My task was to provide the third, and I was permitted to lighten it up by telling a story of the outstanding incident of the day, coupled with some kind of ethical application.

One of the first of these stories, I remember, was that of the fatal seizure of James Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night," in the rooms, in the Euston Road, of Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, no other person than the dying man and the blind one being present until William Sharp ("Fiona Macleod") came in accidentally. This new use of leader columns pleased the public, and thereby increased my desire to get on with my proper work of story-telling as quickly as possible. The opportunity of doing so, in a kind of "prentice" effort, came to me by an accident I have never spoken about before, and it resulted in my writing a novel of which the public (in Great Britain at least) knows nothing to this hour.

Those were the earliest days of the serialization of novels in newspapers, and my editor in Liverpool, in conjunction with an editor in London and, I think, another in Newcastle, conceived the idea of paying what they believed to be a prodigious price in those days (less than a thousand pounds, I think) for the serial rights in a forthcoming story by an authoress who enjoyed great popularity at that time, but is now, I fear, almost forgotten. "It will be a big name to conjure with," he said, and that was perhaps all he was thinking about.

The result was disappointing. The story was fully equal to the average of the authoress's novels, yet it proved to be totally unsuitable for newspaper serialization. Solid blocks of four columns were published week by week without any kind of action in them. Nobody in the story did anything or seemed likely to do anything. As a result readers became restive; some of them wrote insulting letters, and circulations went down. After two months of conversation (the story was to last six) in a "Court of Love," my editor began to realize that it was possible to be a popular and even brilliant writer of books without being a capable writer of serial stories, and that to be an efficient writer of a novel to be published in a newspaper it was necessary to be something of a newspaper-man.

This suggested something to him, and when things were at their worst my editor sent for me and said: "Look here, my boy, you have never written a story, but I think perhaps you could, and if we stop this —— thing can you fill up with some sort of old yarn for, say, eight weeks while we look out for something better?" I jumped at the chance; set to work within a few hours; wrote my first instalment in two days, and it was published at the end of the same week —the famous author's passionate duologues on love disappearing to make place for it.

I dare not say a word for my prentice work except that it was a Manx story, a story of smuggling near my early home, in the bad old days, that lots of things happened in it, and that it "went" like a house afire. For reasons unnecessary to dwell upon I have never (except at one dark moment, from which the wisdom of a publisher saved me) attempted to publish it in this country, and I never shall. But one of my friends cut it out of the columns of the Liverpool newspaper and sent it to America, and there it appeared in paper wrappers, and after that I heard no more of it for a long time.

But some fifteen years later, when I had written several other novels and thought my prentice work was properly forgotten, I went to the United States and Canada, partly as the spokesman of the Society of Authors and partly as the representative of the Colonial Office, to persuade the Canadian Government to take back a copyright Act which seemed to conflict with the interests of British authors; and going to Washington to see the American President about the piracy in America of English books which had provoked the Canadian Act, I visited the Washington Library, and there I had an amusing surprise.

The librarian, who was friendly, wishing to show me with what rapidity books could be gathered up from their shelves and delivered to their readers in the central hall, ordered that every copy of every book of mine in the library should be sent down to me immediately, whereupon, inside thirty seconds, as it seemed, a tornado of volumes came hurtling through the air along wire cages such as are used in department stores for carrying cash, and were kecked down with a crash on to the big table before me like cobblestones over the tailboard of a cart.

I looked them through and found to my amusement, being at the moment the ambassador on copyright law, first, that there was scarcely a copyright book among them, and next, that for every volume of the later novels, upon which I had perhaps prided myself unduly, there were at least ten of the little Manx novel of my youth, published in every kind of pirated edition, by every kind of publishing pirate, at every kind of price, down to five cents a copy, and I was told (perhaps with a little exaggeration) that it had sold in millions.

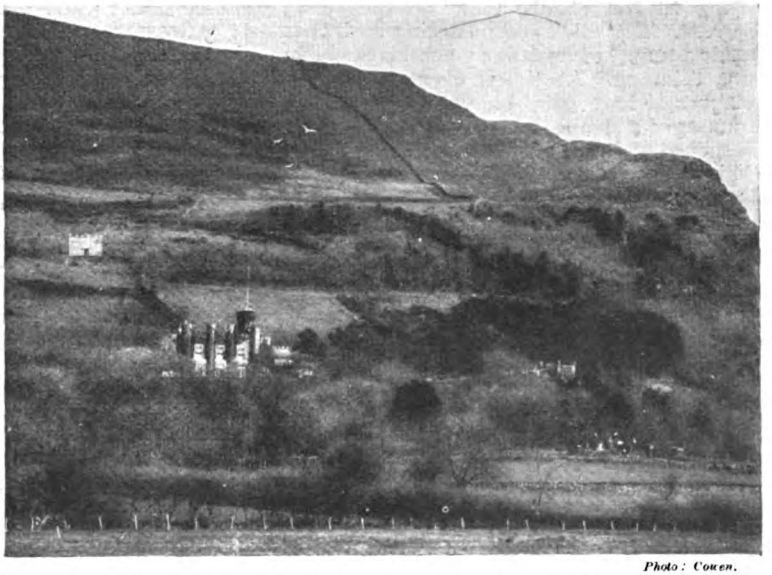

Photo: Cowen.

Greeba Castle, the famous novelist's picturesque home in the Isle of Man.

Such, then, is the history of the story with which I made my first bow as a novelist, although happily the English public know nothing about it.

(To be concluded next month.)

BEAUTY and the BEAST

"Fairy Stories are always True"

By

DOUGLAS NEWTON

ILLUSTRATED BY A. C. MICHAEL

THE canoe was going more slowly now. It no longer rocked but slid forward with a smooth, silken swing to the steady pull of the dying current. The thick and menacing bush that made a tunnel of brooding green-black gloom was thinning. At times, even, there were plaques of hard, steel-blue sky between the framing of sullen leaves. The heat, however, deepened and seemed to coagulate the blood, while the cohorts of winged and biting things increased to horror.

A snag caught the sluggishly-moving craft, checked and held it. Habit rather than strength forced its single occupant to heave from the flat of the bottom and glare over the side. It was as before. There was the sudden screaming of monkeys and the wild whirring of disturbed birds on the river-bank to the right, and the demon shadows began to flit into view against the hell of shadows that was the jungle. Black men slid forward with the sleek, stealthy movement of human panthers. A liana rope snaked out across the dark river.

The occupant of the canoe lifted a leaden arm, rested the muzzle of an automatic pistol on the gunwale of the canoe, fired anyhow. The squawking of the twice-disturbed jungle beasts made an inferno of sound.

The liana rope jerking at the canoe or the movement of the occupant set it free again. It oozed sluggishly on, twisting sullenly, but always going on. The occupant fell back flat again. Those demoniac shadows would not attack the canoe while it moved, and they would not swim off to it—the crocodiles and water snakes prevented that. The current, thank Heaven, ran in the middle of the river.

A crocodile slid off a mud-bank as the craft went by. The surge of its submersion rocked the dug-out violently. It yawed and eddied drunkenly, its nose touched and held on a mid-river bank.

Again the chattering of disturbed fauna as the stealthy black men slid to the verge of the land hungry for their prey. Again the head and shoulders heaving up automatically, again the flung rope, and the snapping crash of pistol fire. This time the canoe held if the rope missed. The occupant dragged a paddle from the canoe and with leaden movements began feebly to poke and shove at the mud bank. A tiny ping sounded in the air, a dart snapped and quivered in the side of the canoe. The occupant pushed and pushed dully and without fear of the poisoned dart. A war club came singing towards the canoe. Then the occupant did duck, and with the sharp effort of that movement stabbed the paddle home hard on the mud. The canoe lurched and went on again. Without strength to recover the paddle the occupant fell back into the bottom of the canoe.

As though the jungle had been torn away by a giant hand, brazen sunlight gave way to gloom. The canoe rocking gently was out on the bosom of a great lake, going forward, but slower and slower. The great lake shimmered with an enormous mother-o'-pearl immobility. Birds of fantastic plumage crossed it like skimming jewels. On the nearer, visible bank a great flat of amazing and flower-jewelled green stretched away to the pearl-blur of distant hills. A Paradise of beauty that meant death, for the green

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was fever swamp. On those maps that entered it this lake was written as Death Lake.

The figure in the bottom of the canoe saw none of this beauty, but just moaned as the glare and the heat of the pitiless sun beat down into the canoe. The canoe went rocking on slower and more slow until it came to a standstill a mile out in the lake. Weeds anchored it there. Automatically the figure tried to rise, failed, lifted a limp arm, pulled trigger one-two-three. Three reports cracked feebly in the empty immensity. Failing fingers pulled trigger again. There was not another shot. The pistol was empty. The hand fell nervelessly. The canoe swayed gently, gently to stillness.

Fifteen minutes later another canoe came creeping over the water. Two men paddled it, another stood upright in it staring over the waters. He was peering here and there curiously. He saw the silent canoe on the water, stared at it. He shouted and stared again. The canoe did not exhibit life or motion. The men paddled on as though to pass the derelict. Suddenly the man thought he might as well examine it. He gave an order. In a lyric curve the oncoming canoe swept in a perfect arc alongside the other. The standing man looked down in it, saw gaitered legs, worn but natty breeches, fine silk shirt swelling at the breasts—he frowned abruptly, looked closer, then exclaimed sharply.

With sure, quick movements he was in the canoe, had lifted fine, thin forearms from across the head. Bobbed wheat-coloured hair framed a wan, pointed, but lovely face. He frowned again and he said "Damn!" As he said it he found two very blue eyes fixed wearily on him. The girl made a limp effort to rise, to lift the pistol, and swooned.

SHE came to with the sting of stimulant in her mouth and a sharp edge of pain in her side just under and behind her left breast. That was where a flung spear had cut a furrow into her side as it went between her body and her left arm. She became clear-headed with a sudden panic. She was on her back in some sort of hut, and her silk shirt had been cut away on the left of her body to her waist. She struggled to rise in a half-dazed condition, reaching for the tatters of the shirt with her hand.

Strong fingers pressed her back, and she looked up into an ugly, deeply-furrowed face. The ugliness, the sense of power in that face made her struggle frantically. The strong hand forced her pitilessly back. A curt voice snapped:—

"Don't be a silly little fool. How am I going to dress that graze if you behave like this?"

"Leave me alone. Leave it alone," she cried, hoarsely. "Don't touch me."

"You'll get tropic gangrene if I don't," he snapped. "Confound it, lie still; don't you realize I'm a doctor?"

His ugliness, his cold power, the unyielding quality of his voice filled her with horror. She struggled against the hand like an imprisoned bird, and her strength fled again, and with it her senses.

Her senses returned slowly. There was a throbbing in her wounded side, but it was a clean smarting. She knew by the feel that it was expertly strapped up. A sense of lassitude was on her, but it was not a dead and hopeless lassitude now. She opened her eyes.

She was in a hut, a tiny doll's house of a hut. Everything was frightfully close and cramped, but extraordinarily and beautifully compact and neat, she saw, too. It was like being inside a perfectly-thought-out toy. She saw a table and two canvas chairs and a gauze-covered hammock slung out of the way in the roof. A tiny but perfectly-equipped kitchenette arrangement filled one corner. The room was bright from two big windows—gauze-covered windows.

She was on a sort of couch made by putting short flat boxes end to end. A cushion lifted her head. She saw that she was wearing a man's silk pyjama coat too big for her. Her gaiters and boots had been taken off. She looked over her shoulder and saw the man.

He was sitting with his back to her at a long, enamel-topped table that stretched along one end of the tiny hut. He was working with a microscope, studying something in it and scribbling on a pad under his right hand. Her eyes took in the shining array of bottles, tubes, retorts, specimen jars; that end of the hut was a perfectly-equipped laboratory. It was cut off from the living quarters by a gauze screen.

The man was about five foot six, small framed but beautifully built. The nattiness of his silk shirt and tussore trousers was amazing in that primitive place. The girl, knowing of her own beauty, wondered if he had smartened himself for her. But no, her vague memory of him was that he had been as spick and span when he stood over her in the canoe. Besides, from what she had seen of that strong, ugly face she guessed him to be a man utterly unconcerned at his effect upon her.

She saw that he wore a mask and long rubber gloves, so that what he was doing was probably dangerous. What was it? Medical research work, no doubt; he was specializing in tropic diseases. Who was he? The name

Denis Scanlan came to her. There had been talk in the coast of one named Denis Scanlan, who buried himself alone in the wilds to grapple with trypansomes, the dread parasites that were such a deadly plague in the tropics. But Denis Scanlan was at a place called Pamba, hundreds of miles away from her father's camp.

The thought made her stir and give a little gasp. Her voice sounded queer and loud in this stark silence. She looked at the neat back of the man. She expected him to spring up and hasten to her side. That was what men did once they had looked upon her beauty. The man with his eye glued to the eyepiece of his microscope went on writing.

She waited until his flying pencil had stopped. He would come then. His hand touched the slide in his instrument and he did not move. She said, clearly :—

"Who are you? Where am I?"

"I'll tell you presently," came his voice, unexpectedly, curtly. "Lie still, please."

"If you'll first——" she began, sure of her power over men, and he snapped back like a blow: "Keep quiet—please." The voice was so curt, the "please" so obviously an afterthought that she was affronted.

"You needn't be rude," she cried.

"Good heavens!" he groaned. "Hasn't the girl any common-sense? I'm on critical work—be silent."

The snap of his tone was like a whip-lash, and whip-lashes were utterly unknown to her. She was stunned into silence. She glared at the neat, absorbed back. The man was a brute, as hateful as he was ugly. She knew of a score of men who would have struck him down at the mere hearing of his tone towards her. Still appallingly weak, she almost cried. The man worked on absorbed.

THERE was no sound in that dead, hot quiet, no other human movement. She was alone in this cramped hut, alone in the primitive wilds with this man. She who had held her own with men was a little afraid. But then those other men had been smooth parlour knights; there was something ruthless and ugly about this man that made him different—and to be feared.

Presently he was reading his notes calmly, packing them away, packing away microscope and slides. He did everything calmly, quietly, neatly. He stripped off mask and gloves and came carefully through the gauze curtain. He stood over her, crowding her in that cramped place, his sense of power and ugliness almost intimidating her, his grey eyes steady and aloof.

"Now you can say what you want to say," he said, evenly.

She wanted to remain silent, to snub him, but how can one do that to the only other person in the world with one? When there is so much the anxious mind must know? Besides, there was that power in him that seemed to sweep away all thought of social hauteur.

"Are you Dr. Scanlan?" she asked.

"That is my name," he said.

So it was true. In anxiety she tried to sit up.

"Then this is Pamba," she cried, "a hundred miles away from Tztaye?"

"One hundred and twenty is nearer," he said, evenly. "So that is where you came from. You must have been three days in that canoe."

"Three days!" she gasped. "How long will it take me to get back?"

"To get back?" There was a curiously dry and attractive smile in his strong lips. "To get back would take more than a week. You'd have to fight the current all the way instead of having it with you. The current—and other things."

"Isn't there a trail?"

"There is. Ten days at least that would take, but it is a form of suicide, anyhow. There is a certain tribe called the Chili-Chili——" He noted her shudder—those steady grey eyes missed very little. "I see you know of them. I saw their blow-pipe darts in your canoe, anyhow."

She stared at him, her senses whirling.

"I can't face that week's journey back," she cried.

"You wouldn't stand it physically, either," he said, not sympathizing, rather as one registering an unpalatable but unalterable fact.

"You'll have to get a messenger to our camp, then," she said.

"That," he said, with resignation, "is also out of the question. I have no one to send."

She stared aghast. "But you can't be alone? You have native boys?"

"Two," he admitted. "But I need them for my work."

"But—but—how is my father to know what has happened to me?"

He frowned. "Let us hope he searches for you in this direction," he said.

"Is he likely to?"

"That depends. Does he know the direction you took?"

"He does not," she said, almost in tears. "Nobody does. He and the others went off on an expedition. It was too risky to take me, they said. That annoyed me. I slipped out of camp when they had gone, when nobody was watching. I went along the river that runs by the camp, but turned aside and then got lost in a network of

streams. The current caught me and I couldn't fight it."

"I see," he said, curtly. "You thought you knew better than expert advisers—and now you *know* better." His voice was cutting, and she hated and feared him. "That network of streams, as you call it, is the watershed for ten thousand square miles. Your people may follow those streams for months without striking the right one."

"Months!" she cried aghast. "Isn't there any other way back to civilization?"

"You'll have to wait here until my relief-party comes—in eight weeks' time."

Eight weeks, penned in this place with this ugly, grim, forceful brute! Eight weeks lost to the world over which she had queened it! Eight weeks—it was monstrous. She said so.

"It's impossible," she cried. "Don't you know who I am? I'm Fennel Norman."

A gleam of his dry, whimsical humour came to his steady eyes. "I'm afraid mere scientists don't move in exalted circles," he said.

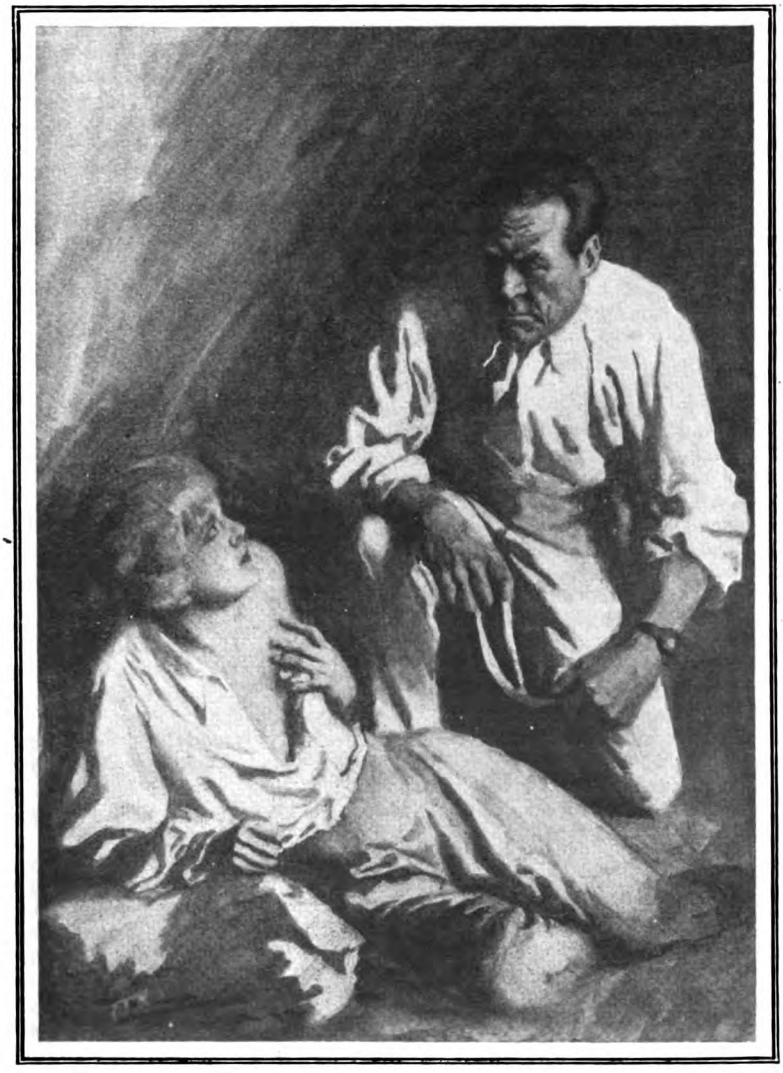
"I mean I am the daughter of Hoyle Norman," Again the flicker of amusement in the keen eyes. "He's the millionaire, you know."

"I know," he said, dryly, giving point to his lack of awe, "but I don't see the bearing, unless"—the smile that made his ugliness don a queer charm leapt to his lips—"unless there's some suggestion of a bribe in the information."

"My father would know how to be grateful to anyone who carried news of me," she said, breathlessly. She felt hope. Her life had given her the impression that the world of men might be divided roughly into two groups, one that reacted to her beauty, the other that reacted to her wealth. Outside those there were no others, she had thought—until now. Denis Scanlan's ugliness wrinkled in actual laughter.

"I fear I consider my work more to the point than even that glorious promise," he said.

"Your work would be only interrupted for a time," she urged, unable to believe his indifference to wealth as well as beauty.



"Don't be a silly little fool. How am I going to dress that graze if you behave like this?"

"Every minute of that time is precious, Miss Norman," he said. "I have too little as it is. Between rainy season and rainy season, that is all. I cannot afford to waste a moment."

"Haven't you any humanity?" she cried, with tears of fear and anger. He became grave, stern almost, at once.

"We have different views about humanity," he said, and he nodded towards the laboratory. "That represents mine. Uninterrupted work there will, I hope, give me, before the rains come, knowledge that will enable me to lower the death-rate in this hinterland by two per cent. Let me interrupt that work and this land must wait another six months or a year before I can provide relief. That is my humanity, Miss Norman, and I think the need of saving two per cent. of deaths in a population of eleven millions over six months outweighs your inconvenience and your father's anxiety."

She was numb, staring at him. His figures meant nothing to her. She was Fennel Norman, the daughter of a millionaire. Her every wish, her every desire, had been immediately gratified up to this. She could not believe she could be of such small account. She stared and stared, feeling that she was in a mad, bad dream.

THERE was a tap on the door. A superb negro entered, bowed gravely to Denis Scanlan and to her, began to set the table for the evening meal. Fennel watched the bronze Hercules at work, recognized him for a high type, brave, willing, and capable. She heard him talking to the doctor, telling him that the Chili-Chili were slinking out of the woods on the other side of the lake. She was more concerned with the fact that he spoke English than with what he said. English, she could speak to him, she could tell him how well her father would pay him for news of her. Her eyes followed him, she smiled when he looked her way, her eyes dwelt on him with meaning when he went out of the door.

Denis Scanlan's voice cut in with a decisive harshness even for him: "I am not going to have you tampering with my boys, Miss Norman."

She shrank from him; he was looking at her sternly, he had read her thoughts. She didn't answer him, stared at him red-cheeked but defiant. She thought she had him beaten, that he knew she could command his boys with money bribes. Again he read her thoughts.

"You can't," he said, harshly. "They are Imbabe, whose word is their bond. I'm not afraid of that, but I am against you unsettling them. And I resent your idea that you can use anybody you like to serve your whims."

The harshness in his tone made her cry: "You don't think I'm worth it."

"That boy would be done to death—slowly—by the Chili-Chili if you had your way and he attempted to get through. Do you think it fair that a man should give his life for the mere waywardness of a spoilt and headstrong girl? I don't."

"You're abominable," she cried in anger and fear. "You seem bent on keeping me pent up alone with you here for months. Don't you realize what people will say?"

At that he really flared out: "Good heavens, do you think I like it? Don't you realize that it's even more annoying for a man with real work to do to have you on his hands? Do you think I'm one of your ballroom cavaliers who have nothing to think about but women?" He pulled himself together with a great effort of will. "We shall have to put up with it, that's all."

Fennel stared in real loathing and fear at the one man who had dared to talk to her straight. How grim and forceful his face was—not ugly really, but strong and implacable. That frightened her, and thrilled her too. But to be penned up alone with this man for weeks and weeks—— She put her weak arms over her face and began to cry.

She cried steadily for hours. There was misery in it, weakness, but much of the petulant anger of a spoilt child who had been corrected. She refused the food the man brought her. She meant to refuse the medicine, but something in his manner overbore her. He said, curtly: "You've got a touch of fever; you'll make it worse if you exhaust yourself like this." She turned her head away from him; she would have turned her back on him, but she was too weak to lift her body. She went on crying.

He couldn't waste time on her, she saw. He went through the gauze curtain after the meal, and at once was busy on the notes he had taken at the microscope. He worked steadily at them and his books in a manner which told her she was quite forgotten. She slowly ceased crying to gaze at him and to wonder at a man who could be indifferent to what most men had found so alluring. There was that English nobleman who had been willing to break off a great match to marry her—others—and yet this man merely regarded her as an annoyance. She was growing feverish and light-headed, she wanted to get up, tear those books from his hands, face him, force him to listen to her, to appreciate her position, her beauty. She

was furious with him. Her hatred was a rage. Perhaps she did begin to mutter in her fever. He looked round suddenly at her, rose, came to her side, felt her pulse. She tried to tear her wrist away; he was too strong for her. He left her, unhitched the hammock rope and lowered it, folded the gauze net back, arranged the bedding ready; then he turned towards her.

"What are you going to do?" she cried, trying to shrink back to the wall.

"I'm putting you to bed," he said. "You'll be better there."

"Don't touch me!" she cried, passionately. "Don't come near me!"

He regarded her with his strange dry smile. "Can you manage for yourself?" he asked. And on her furious assertion that she could, he nodded and went out of the netted door. She wrenched herself upright with a great effort of strength, stood, and fell in a faint.

SHE must have passed into sleep, for when she woke she was in the hammock, and Denis Scanlan was putting a bar across the door—she watched him in the lamplight. Her eyes resting on him noted the clean, neat compactness of his movements. Rather a fine man, she thought, if a beast. Then she saw her clothes hanging under gauze, realized where she was, how she must have come there. Her cheeks burnt with the knowledge. And watching Scanlan, they burnt afresh. He was barring the house for the night—and he was inside it. She was pent up in that tiny hut with him for the night. He was stretching bedding along the boxes on which she had lain, he was kicking off boots. She cried out: "What are you doing?"

"Isn't it obvious?" he asked. "Also it is ten o'clock, and I'm an early riser."

"But—but in here," she cried, "a place like this!"

"Where else?" he asked, staring at her.

He didn't understand—or wouldn't. She said with burning cheeks: "In our camp the men slept in separate tents."

His curious dry smile came swiftly to his lips again: "I can't boast that accommodation," he said.

"When *they* could not," she said, pointedly, "they slept out in the open and gave the tent to me."

"The open here is swamp, full of tsetse fly and what-not else," he said, grimly.

"But your men are out there!"

"They have their own protected hut," he said, "and I don't sleep with natives." Her wide-eyed horror at his resolution was her only answer. He said, grimly: "Have a little common-sense, please. To sleep outside this net-protected hut is to invite death. Quite apart from any human inclination, I happen to be doing work too valuable to be interrupted."

"Your work counts more than decency," she said, wildly.

He regarded her gravely: "I think it does, as a matter of fact," he said, quietly. "But don't you seem to have that thing badly on the brain?" He frowned speculatively. "It's idleness and too much civilization, I suppose. Your lives are so devoid of real experience and you've so little to do that it is the only thing you can think of. That explains the modern novel, anyhow. Don't you realize that people—real, hard-working, fully-occupied people—have something better to think of?"

He frowned again at her: "You're beautiful, of course, and I suppose any amount of tabby-cat men have made love to you," he said harshly, "but I'll ask you to clear that nonsense out of your head while you're here. I've got no time for parlour games, and you mean nothing to me except a nuisance. I'm trying to be sensible about it and to admit that, on the whole, you are the victim of an accident as much as I; but for Heaven's sake don't complicate matters with this purring drawing-room tomfoolery."

He stared harshly at her as though he could shake her, and between her wheat-coloured hair her soft, lovely face stared tremulously back. Then with a swing of violence, as though he was tearing himself physically away from the sight of her, he turned about, put out the lamp, and she heard him settling himself for the night on the boxes.

Long she lay awake, feverish, fearful, curious, torn by thoughts. He was the rudest, vilest, ugliest, most brutal creature she had ever met, her mind told her as she lay listening to his deep, even breathing. And he was the strangest and most baffling too. He had treated her like a ruffian—nothing less. But he had admitted she was beautiful. He had said she meant nothing to him, and yet the way he had had to tear his eyes away from her face was not at all unlike a similar mesmerism common to the drawing-room he despised. And was he really ugly? She seemed to wake early particularly to find out. In the grey before dawn she watched him sleeping serenely; one strong arm trailing to the floor, throat bare and powerful, she studied the sleep-smoothed face. "Ugly, frightfully ugly," she thought, "but something in it that puts it sheer above mere good looks." She pretended to sleep as Denis Scanlan opened his eyes, but all the time her mind was occupied with that air of fineness and power

which made this man so different from other men she had met. He was a beast, an utter beast, but somehow she had to think and think of him.

She became part of the clear-cut routine of the place, just part of Denis Scanlan's job. He fed her, treated her, tended her, dressed her wound, helped even to wash her with the same impersonal common-sense and patience he gave to his research work. She resented his indifference, but she stopped thinking of what the world would say to this queer and peculiar intimacy in that cramped hut. It didn't seem to matter. Denis Scanlan made everything so natural, matter-of-fact.

He left her every day to hunt for specimens, but there was always a boy on guard and within call, and it was usually the Imbabe boy who spoke English (the other did not). Fennel Norman wondered at this. Did he consider that boy bribe-proof or was he showing that he trusted her? Or was he contemptuous of her power?

From this boy she learnt that Denis Scanlan was known as the Lord of Unseen Death. The boy said this often, as though it gave him confidence, and he looked towards the jungle of the panther men of Chili-Chili as he said it.

THE life Fennel Norman led would have been written down as absolutely hateful, boring, by her smart circle—she found it unexpectedly and strangely satisfying. Denis Scanlan found her old magazines to read while he was away; when he was there she found a queer absorption in watching him at work beyond the gauze screen. He did everything with such concentration, patience, thoroughness. He was, she had learnt from his curt conversations, searching for the parasites of two deadly wasting diseases, and also for a means of eliminating a cattle tick, something like the "red water tick," that devastated herds in this hinterland. It was thrilling to realize that on that enamel table and through his quiet skill a battle of life and death was going on, and that thanks to this patient, calm man those fat lands would become healthy for people who would thrive and grow rich on vast herds that his undemonstrative work had also rendered possible. The thought seemed to obliterate his ugliness and hatefulness.

And life was not without its excitements, too. One day he rose quickly and stood listening. She held her breath. In the dead silence of the hut she heard the pinging buzz of some sort of mosquito. She saw his eyes searching for the insect. He struck at it once or twice, but missed it. Then he watched it carefully, slowly held up his arm. The buzzing ceased. In a flash she saw a tiny blot on the smooth bronze of his skin. Then he struck. She cried out with an anxiety that surprised her: "What was it?"

"All right," he said with his quick, fine smile, "it didn't bite." But she saw that he swabbed his arm with iodine and knew that he had deliberately lured that winged death to his flesh in order that it should not go free in the hut.

When she was able to leave the hammock she discarded the magazines and began to read his library of medical text-books. She was driven back on this in a sense, for on the second day she was walking through the savannas the Imbabe boy suddenly cried: "Down, missy, down!" As she crouched his long black finger had pointed, and on the sky-line she had seen dark, lithe, stealthy forms with long blow-pipes and spears. They stared towards her before abruptly vanishing with the sly, swift tread of panthers.

That evening Denis Scanlan asked her not to show herself too much outside the hut. She was in a deck chair in the air then; she immediately rose and went inside the hut. He followed her with a queer little smile twisting his lips: "You see, I am learning to obey now," she said with a smile that answered his.

"You are more yourself now," he said, which was a tribute.

"In more ways than one," she answered soberly. "It is the Chili-Chili, I suppose? Am I going to cause you more trouble?"

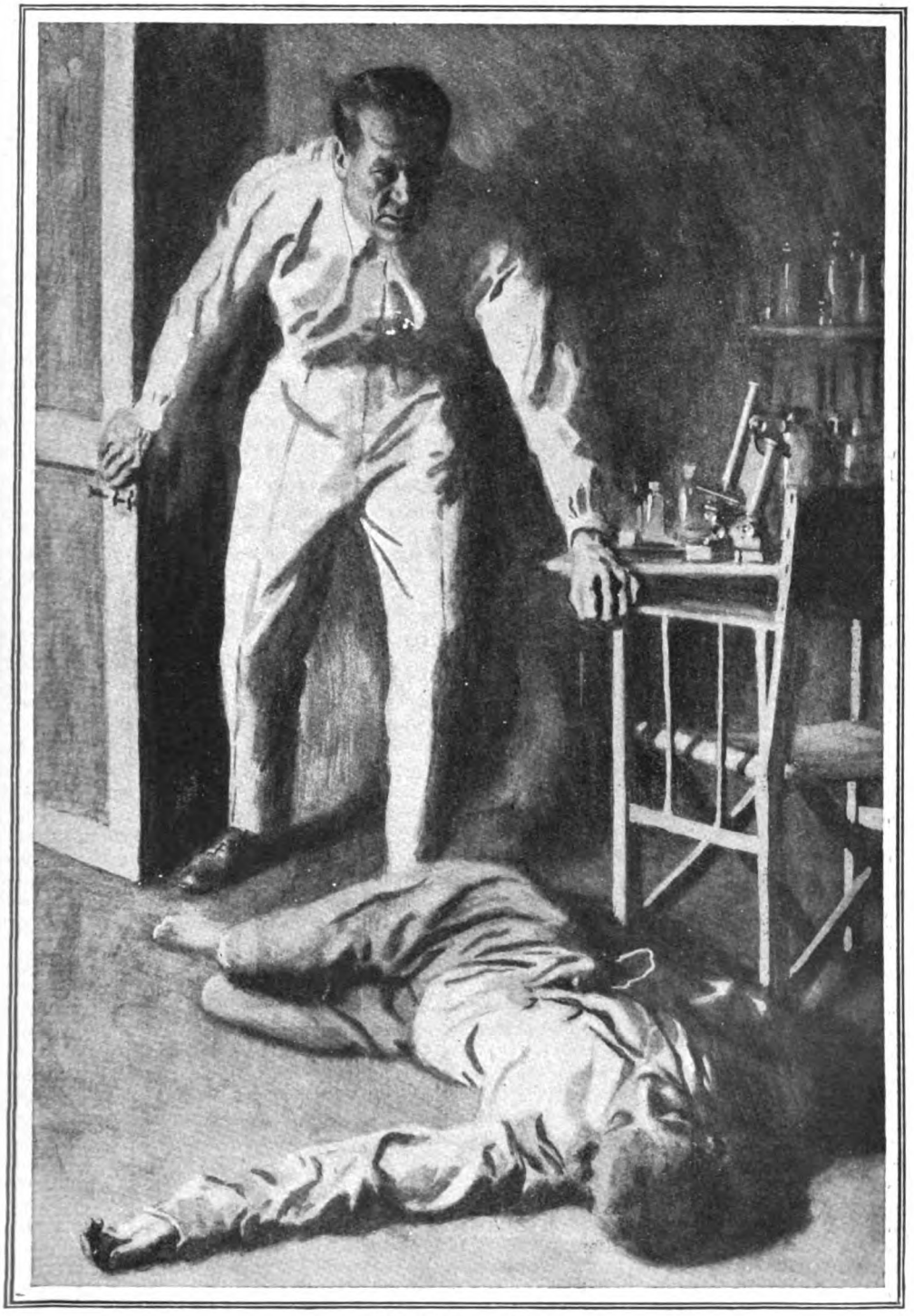
"Oh, you can't help that anyhow," he laughed. Then he frowned. "I don't expect trouble. I've taught 'em horse sense. But we don't want to tempt them."

"Are they drawing-room men that the sight of a woman upsets them?" she said with a soft laugh.

He actually coloured. "They're ruffians," he said. "Slavers. A white woman is a valuable prize. You'll keep in cover?" She nodded, and he said surprisingly: "I'm afraid this will make it duller than ever for you."

She stared at him, so unexpected was his concern for her, and he coloured again violently and went out. She looked after him, and her smile was not without grimness. His taunt about drawing-room men succumbing to her allure was coming home to roost, she thought.

That forced her back on to his books, but she had her own interest in them too. With Denis Scanlan as a living example of what they meant, she found them fascinating. He was inclined to be dryly amused at her interest until she began to ask questions. Then he found her so receptive that he forgot even his microscope in the ardour



She fell in a faint.

of explaining and expounding. Indeed, one day he declared they must leave such talks until after dinner, for he was using up all the daylight he needed for the microscope.

"I'm still being a nuisance," she smiled.

"No," he said with puckered brow, as though facing something unexpected. "It has done me good. Hammering things out like this helps one to get out of grooves. I'm getting a new slant on some of this business——" Then he added, flushing, "You've managed to get rather a wonderful grip of the thing in so short a time, Miss Fennel."

"Oh," she said, smiling softly. "Drawing-room women aren't necessarily unintelligent."

He said with a sudden laugh: "I *was* a darn fool when I said that of you."

SINCE they had seen the Chili-Chili one of the boys had vanished and Denis Scanlan went out alone, leaving the Imbabe boy on closer guard. One day this boy suddenly fired the shot-gun which was, with the collector's gun, the only weapon in the hut, asked Fennel to go into the hut, and then squatted on the doorstep, his weapon ready across his knees. Fennel, looking out of a wire-netted window, saw far away across the green a series of thin, wavering lines approaching across the grass. For hours she watched and saw the lines define themselves into files of lithe, stealthy men, saw the war-plumes nodding on heads, saw the long threads of blow-pipes, the glint of the sun gold on broad-bladed spears.

All day she watched the Chili-Chili marching towards the hut, heart beating, mind wondering when Denis Scanlan would return, if he would return in time. She glanced now and then at the array of bottles beyond the gauze curtain cutting off the laboratory. There were poisons there, she knew; ought she not to choose one ready for the last dread resort? But she could not stir until she had seen Denis Scanlan again—just once again.

He came, walking calmly, just as the army of lean black men began to debouch and thicken into a half-moon mass before the hut. He walked casually, unconcerned even, to the hut, into it without throwing a glance towards the dread Chili-Chili. But Fennel saw he was deadly pale when he faced her. He looked at her squarely. "You're not afraid, Fennel?" he asked, harshly, using her name for the first time.

"Very much," she said, with a tight smile. "But less uneasy now you have come." She hadn't meant to say that. She hated him for a beast—but she said it.

He smiled at her: "You're a very wonderful child after all, Fennel, my dear," he said, and he hadn't meant to say that either, but desperate moments bring out truth.

"I've learnt what you had to teach, Denis," she said, evenly. And then, after their glances had held for what seemed a long time: "It's me they want, isn't it, Denis? They would have left you alone otherwise."

"Very much," he said. "I must teach them to leave me—and mine"—Fennel caught her breath at the words—"alone from now on. Don't be afraid, Fennel: I can manage them."

She looked at his small, compact figure, the figure that looked so slight beside the splendid torso of his own Imbabe boy; she looked through the window at the gathering cloud of Chili-Chili warriors. Thousands of tall, strong warriors crowding about the hut, their weapons rustling, their voices clicking, the cruel, ugly movement of them like the ominous surge of a sea that presages a storm. How could one small unarmed man prevail against that host? And yet, looking at Denis Scanlan's set face, Fennel saw something that made her feel he would.

Harsh, throaty voices shouted in a way to make her shiver, so beastly was the threat in them. Denis Scanlan paid no attention. He went imperturbably to his laboratory bench, selected what he needed for the work before him. The shouting redoubled. He turned easily and called "Boy!"

The Imbabe boy, chest heaving, breath hissing through broad, distended nostrils, but a look of fighting determination on his face, came in at the door. Denis Scanlan shot a question at him, and he answered:

"Chili-Chili come make big pow-wow Lord. Tell you come out one-time fit to palaver with them."

Denis Scanlan, at arm's length and breath held, poured three drops of fluid into a tiny test tube; stoppered it, said curtly: "Tell them I no fit to palaver with them so long as they close to hut. Tell them go back one hundred paces from hut. All big fellers must go back one hundred paces. Chief feller and ten braves without spears stand twenty paces from house. They do that or I not fit palaver."

The Imbabe boy grunted appreciation. He turned through the door, gained silence with lifted hand, shouted his message in the Chili-Chili tongue. There was dead silence after it, a perceptible shifting back of the Chili-Chili warriors. Voices protesting. The big voice of a chief cutting down all other voices. The Imbabe boy turned into the room.

"He say he has three thousand spears. He say he can sweep over your house as the storm beats down the forest. He say you come one-time palaver as he say."

Denis Scanlan put down a little cage of wire mesh, reached for his rubber gloves and mask.

"Tell him my way is the way of the palaver, or there is no palaver. I, the Lord of Unseen Death, have said it."

THE silence that followed the Imbabe boy's shout seemed endless to Fennel. She could see the Chili-Chili shifting on their feet between fear and hate. They talked among themselves. Some fingered weapons, some edged away. And then all went back. They went back sullenly, suddenly, making a dark, menacing half-moon round the open hundred-foot space. An enormous man and ten picked bucks stood facing the hut twenty paces away. The Imbabe boy came into the hut to say that what the Lord of Unseen Death had ordered had been done. At Denis Scanlan's gesture he took out a canvas chair. Denis gave a hard grin to Fennel and leisurely pulled on mask and gloves. Picking up the tiny test tube and the gauze cage he walked slowly through the door.

At the sight of Denis in his mask a gasp that was half fear went up from the ranks of the Chili-Chili spearmen. It was followed by dead silence as the young scientist sat in the chair. The Imbabe boy drew up at his elbow. Denis's masked eyes swept the ranks of the braves and a shiver seemed to follow the passage of that glance. Then he said in English to his boy: "They may speak—I will listen."

A tremendous buck of a warrior stood forward, began to talk in harsh clicks and gutturals. The Imbabe boy translated:—

"They mean no harm to the Lord of Unseen Death. They want the white woman. Give them the white woman and they will go away in peace."

Fennel heard and her heart stood still. Let Denis obey and his life was safe and his work of saving lives could go on. She heard Denis Scanlan say slowly, clearly: "That is an infamous thing to ask and worthy of punishment. Tell him it will never be so."

"He says they have three thousand spears and you are but one, Lord, and a small man at that," said the Imbabe, after the big warrior had spoken.

"Tell them I am not called the Lord of Unseen Death for nothing," said Denis, and a low, fearful grunt sped round the half-moon as the boy shouted his translation. The big savage strove to sweep away this impression with bombastic shouts.

"What can one do against three thousand spears? You have no weapons. You are but a tiny man. I myself can crush you with my own hands, and the others will dash in and take the woman," he shouted, and the Imbabe translated.

Denis stood up slowly, an inadequate figure beside the towering warrior.

"Let this boaster make good his boast," he said. "If he can the woman is yours."

Fennel's heart stopped beating. The great warrior wrung back a step, the big chief spoke. With a snarl of fury the man flung himself on the small white man. The result seemed inevitable. Denis Scanlan did not move to fight, he just put out his hand towards the snarling face. Hand and face touched for a second—in abrupt and astonishing collapse the great warrior fell dead.

He fell stricken dead by no more than a touch of the unarmed hand. A gasp went up round the black ring. It drew back several steps in a surge of superstitious fright. Denis Scanlan, without a glance at the dead man, sat down again. He spoke, the Imbabe boy translated: "Whose boast is proved?"

Fennel had watched with startled eyes. She could not see how he had done it. Then she caught a faint whiff of something that made her recall the pear-drop sweets of her youth. She knew what that meant, and she understood at once. Denis Scanlan had held that tiny tube in his hand when the great savage came in contact with it. The tube contained hydrocyanic or prussic acid, a single inhalation of which means instant death. The great savage had inhaled and died.

No wonder that even the dread Chili-Chili were awed. The warrior's sudden and startling death must seem to them only explainable by the stroke of an all-powerful demon. She could see fear rippling along the pack of black men, she could see that even the huge chief was trembling. Denis Scanlan stared at them long and grimly. Then his voice spoke sternly and slowly, and the Imbabe boy translated with terrible impressiveness.

"I, who make good my boasts, speak," said Denis Scanlan. "You know me. You saw me strike down this man with a wave of my hand. You have heard that I can slay a tribe with no weapon save my will. You have heard that——"

A chorus of groans and mutters arose along the black half-moon. There was a shifting of fear that might have become a panic run. The stern voice went on:—

"Do not move. You are here in my power and I will deal with you as my anger or clemency sees fit." He held up his gauze cage. "Here are imprisoned ten hundred of

the *nsi-nsi* (tsetse fly). Death! The death of slow sleep. You know it?"

Something like a howl of fear went up from the Chili-Chili. They knew the *nsi-nsi*, the little fly that can destroy tribes and kingdoms with its slow, creeping, horrible, wasting death. Fennel saw their terror with almost a gust of hysteria catching at her throat. Denis Scanlan had turned the tables; this strange, ugly man was amazing. He was no longer standing on guard now; he was attacking, dominating, dictating.

She heard his voice going on calmly, the Imbabe translating grimly. He was browbeating them. He was putting the fear of death into three thousand fighting spearmen. He was threatening to loose the *nsi-nsi* death on them, to wipe them out in slow agony as he had wiped the warrior out in one swift stroke unless they did his will and bound themselves by promises. She heard the cracked shouts that roared promises, any promise he wished to exact, such was the terror of the Chili-Chili. They had seen him stretch out no more than his fingers to a strong man and that man had fallen down dead. They veritably believed that each tsetse fly in that gauze cage was his servant, his familiar, an enslaved demon that would obey the orders of the Lord of Unseen Death and bite each one of the crowd there at his command. They were afraid with a crawling terror. They wailed their submission, they made their promises never to attack whites again.

Denis Scanlan said to the chief: "Stand next me here and bid your fighting men turn and leave my land," and, trembling, the great chief came and stood by him and

The great warrior fell stricken dead by no more than a touch of the unarmed hand. A gasp went up round the black ring.

gave his orders, and in wave after wave the Chili-Chili went in long, fearful strides back to their jungle.

When Denis Scanlan at last came in and put the fully-occupied gauze cage and the tube of prussic acid back in his laboratory,

she watched him with shining eyes. As he stripped the mask off he showed her a red, whimsical face.

"Impressive, no doubt," he said, "but infernally hot in this climate."

"Denis!" she cried in a choked voice, "Denis!"

He came quietly to her side. "Feeling the reaction, Fennel? It was hard for you, my dear. But it's all over now."

"You're wonderful," she breathed. 'And I believe you would have done it."

"What," he said, wryly, "loosed the tsetse on them? Undone all the work that years of labour have accomplished?"

"I believe you would have done it, Denis," she whispered, close to him, "even though I am a wayward, useless creature."

He looked at her, took her face in his hands, then he said softly, "Yes, my dear, I would have done it—for *you*." He held her so for a moment. "You see how the heart plays the deuce with hard-grained, ugly scientific men as well as the drawing-room variety?"

"And—and it's not so very unpleasant after all?" She smiled up at him.

"By Jove!" he answered, "anything but," and he bent and kissed her.

WHEN her father arrived three days later, she greeted him with affection, but with a certain amount of feminine unexpectedness.

"Somebody must have picked up my trail," she said. "Dennis said it would take months for you to find me."

"Somebody did," said the millionaire, frowning; "the Imbabe boy that fellow sent off to find us. And you don't seem too pleased about it. And you call him Denis? You seem very thick with that ugly little ruffian."

"Ugly little ruffian!" she smiled. "Yes, isn't he that? And the rudest man I've ever met—a beast! But then—I'm considered something of a beauty, I believe."

"I should think you were," frowned her father. "The most beautiful girl of your set. But what's that to do with your beast?"

"Only that when beauty and the beast come together the end is inevitable. You remember the fairy story?" She smiled softly towards Denis Scanlan standing by his hut. "Fairy stories are always true."

"What I have said I have said"

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY H.M.BROCK R.I.

I.

RALPH and Maidie, his wife, were walking up Grosvenor Place on a fine warm morning. He was forty and she was getting on that way. She had a snub nose, freckles, and red hair. On the other hand, she was slim and pretty, and she did not look her age. He had married her, long after his very sensational rise in the world, from his own original class.

Just as he had once been a working engineer, so had she been a Board-school mistress, in the Five Towns. She had left a Board-school to enter and rule his town house, his country house, his yacht, and to make the acquaintance of his swell friends and keep even with them, and with forty or fifty servants, and to keep her end up in general—and especially with him. In the main she had succeeded, by learning some things and flatly refusing to learn other things. They had had many and magnificent quarrels, and one baby.

The baby was her strong point, for he adored the infant with all the undisciplined fury of his nature. But she had other strong points. In addition to loving her in his neolithic manner, he respected her because she belonged to the select band of persons who had absolutely no fear of him.

They were going that morning to a wholesale house behind Holborn to buy the finest perambulator in the world for the baby. They were walking because she desired to walk through the streets by his side. They had walked from Belgrave Square as far as Grosvenor Place when he was overtaken by an attack of his notorious restlessness.

"Here, lass," said he, snapping at her. "I've had enough of this. I take my exercise with tennis. Let's have a taxi. We should be all day getting to Holborn at this rate."

"No!"

"*Yes!*"

"See here!" said she. "We'll go on the top of a bus."

Now he had not been on a bus nor in a bus for many years. The notion of a bus made a romantic appeal to him. There was something most amusing and strange about the notion of *him* travelling by bus.

"*No!*" he repeated.

She laughed happily, knowing that he meant yes.

"Yes," she said. "It's number 99. It passes here and goes right past the place. It'll be here in a minute."

They waited. 25's, 25*a*'s, 25*b*'s, 125's, 44's, 16's went by, having duly stopped in front of them. But not a 99. It happened that Maidie was just as impatient as Ralph himself, though differently.

"Oh, come on," she said at length. "We'll take a 25 and change at the top of Bond Street."

He loved to see her impatient—if she grew impatient first. The spectacle of her girlish impatience would put him into a mood of superior and benevolent serenity. He would treat her as a placid, experienced, kindly old gentleman might treat a charming, capricious child.

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"Now don't be impatient, my dear," said he. "We have all the morning before us. You decided we should go by a 99, and we'll go by a 99 and no other. It's bound to be along soon now. And I'm not going to stir from this pavement till it does come along."

"Let's walk on a bit, then."

"No. I'm going by a 99, and I sha'n't stir from here till it comes," he repeated. "Not on your life."

"I know they don't run often," she said.

"You ought to have told me that before," he said.

Five minutes elapsed. At last Ralph, whose serenity was beginning to wear thin, beckoned to a policeman.

"How often do the 99 buses go past here?" Ralph inquired.

The policeman answered:—

"Oh, they took that service off yesterday, sir."

"The deuce they did!" murmured Ralph in a queer tone.

At that moment a 25 bus came up.

"Come *on!*" said Maidie; she was very quick in resolve.

She had one foot on the step when he pulled her by the arm.

"Here," he said. "I said I wouldn't leave this pavement except by a 99. Not on your life, my girl."

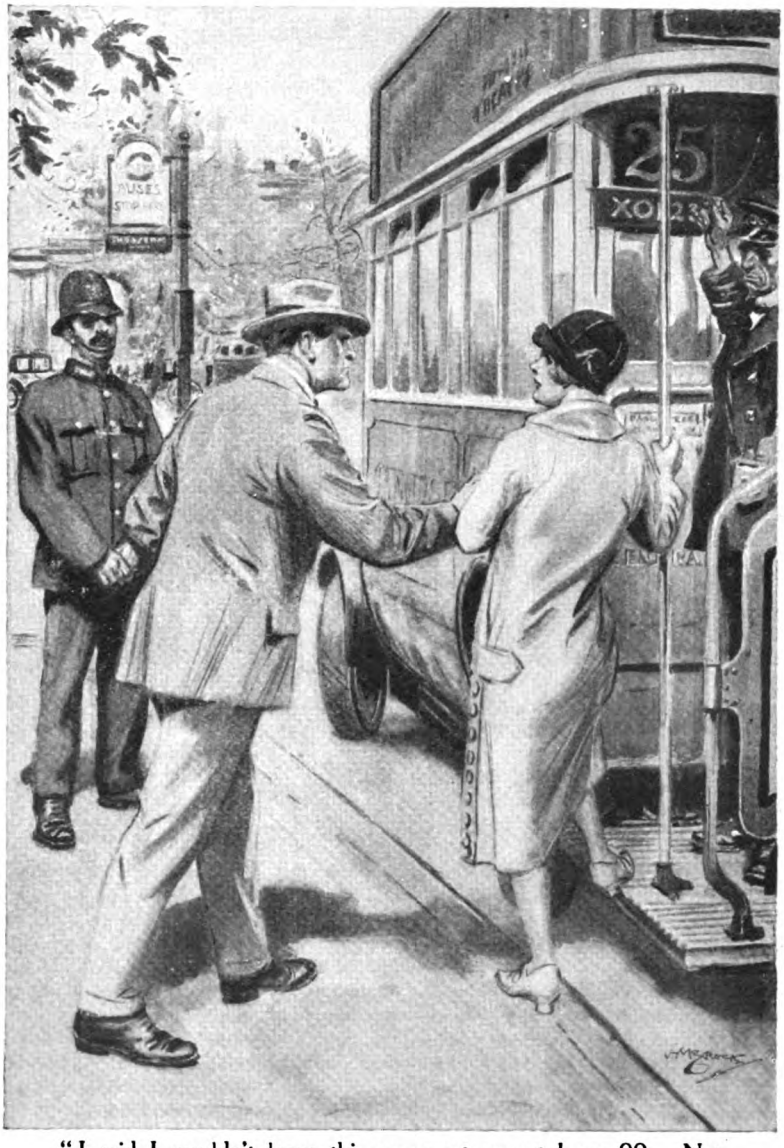
"Pah!" she burst out, in blazing disdain. "You can't come that sort of thing over me, my lad. Are you coming or aren't you?"

As he made no reply, she shook off his arm and boarded the bus, which instantly departed.

II.

"OFFICER," said Ralph, approaching the policeman again, "I wonder whether you could do something for me? I'm Lord Furber."

And he was Lord Furber—Lord Furber of Bursley: the first person who had ever given to the mother of the Five Towns the distinction of serving for a territorial title. Public munificence connected with a Midland university, and his



"I said I wouldn't leave this pavement except by a 99. Not on your life, my girl."

extreme distinction in the engineering world, accounted satisfactorily for the title. And, unlike many peers of the lower middle-class, he had used his peerage where a peerage ought to be used—namely, in the House of Lords. He spoke frequently, and trenchantly, in the House of Lords, exasperating the aristocrats therein by telling them what he deemed to be the truth about themselves, and then soothing them by telling them what he knew to be the truth about the labouring class. His speeches were well reported, especially in his own newspaper, *The Echo*; so that of late he had become a celebrated figure in two worlds, if not in three. He was known of the populace. Newspapers no longer said: "Lord Furber, the great engineer." They said: "Lord Furber."

The policeman did not blench before the dazzling name. He was wearing the blue-and-white armlet of duty, and all the majesty of Great Britain was behind him. He just benevolently nodded.

"Are there any habitual loafers around here that I could send on an errand?"

The policeman looked about, and Ralph looked about. Not a loafer! Everybody seemed to be either busy with his own urgent affairs, or well-dressed. The policeman said he knew of none.

"I suppose you couldn't go yourself—and risk it? Worth your while."

The policeman gave a grandiose grin at the extraordinary folly of such a suggestion.

"I tell you what I *could* do, my lord," said he. "I could do it for you when I come off duty—twelve o'clock."

"Thank you. I'm very grateful for your offer," answered Ralph, turning away and instantly and entirely forgetting the policeman.

He had a sensation of discomfort. He was being balked, he who was never balked, he with whom to want was to have in all material things. He was marooned in the middle of Grosvenor Place, on a triangular area of pavement, which an invisible barrier prevented him from leaving, and he wanted immediate contact with his establishment of servants, secretaries, and other persons whose function in Nature's plan was to do his bidding. Once contact was effected, the rest would be easy to his masterful volition, limitless resources, and organizing ingenuity.

Lord Furber became, with the horse,

He saw a man standing by a horse near the pavement. The horse was attired in a costly black mackintosh upon which were printed in white the words "Our Dumb Friends League." The business of the horse, which was fed, lodged, and clothed by an association of kind hearts who had somehow never heard of the existence of the motor-van and the motor-lorry, was to help, free of charge, overtaxed horses up the hill from Victoria to Hyde Park Corner. The horse had that minute arrived from Victoria

with another horse and a coal-cart in tow, and was very proud because this was his first job in three days.

" Sure ! " cried Ralph, rather gleeful at the picturesque prospect of Lord Furber holding a horse in Grosvenor Place.

the centre of a protesting mix-up of motor-cars, taxis, and vans.

" See here," said Ralph to the horse's attendant. " I'm Lord Furber." The attendant touched his hat. " I live at Essington House in Belgrave Square—you know, the big house on the corner. Can you run down there—it isn't a couple of minutes—and ask for my secretary, Miss Hummel, and ask her to come up here to me now, as quick as she can ? It'll be worth ten shillings to you."

" Will you hold my horse ? " the man asked.

He seized the rein, and the man set forth. But the horse, inexcusably forgetting that he was a dumb friend, gave a loud neigh and set off after the man. Lord Furber was dragged into the roadway and became, with the horse, the centre of a protesting mix-up of motor-cars, taxis, and vans.

" Hi ! " shouted Ralph to the man, who returned. " Take your d——d nag ! He's too thoroughbred for me."

The policeman had to straighten out the disorder.

It was at this juncture that Ralph found the idea which he ought to have found at the start. He stopped an empty taxi.

"See here, driver. I'm Lord Furber. I live——," etc., ending with: "Bring her back here. It'll be worth a pound to you."

The driver, whose taxi was gay with curtains and flowers, and who was accustomed to the unfathomable caprices of the rich, merely touched his smart hat and sped away, throwing over his Melton Mowbray shoulder: "Back in five minutes, guv'nor."

He was back in four minutes.

"The young lady wasn't in, my lord. They've telephoned for her to your City office."

"She'll know where to come to?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You're a smart fellow," said Ralph, paying a pound. "D'you want a job?"

"No, my lord. Thank you, my lord. I own this here bus. She's my wife. And she'd miss me."

It seemed to Ralph as if, after a long period of sheltered existence, he was out again unprotected in the bleak winds of the wide world. He had three things rarely found in combination: great brains, character, and great wealth. He was also a realist about human nature, and he was well aware that such a combination is and must always be surrounded by flattery. He thought that in his estimates of himself in his relations with mankind he had made all due allowance for flattery. Now he discovered that he had not.

The young policeman had maintained all his nerve and independence; the horse-keeper had shown no great disappointment whatever at the loss of ten shillings, and the taxi-driver had humorously turned down the mighty peer.

Worst of all, Ralph had believed in the dependableness of Miss Hummel as deeply as he believed in anything. Miss Hummel ought not to have budged from Essington House; but, counting on a free morning, and drawn away by the attraction of love, she had failed in the supreme duty of not budging.

Yes, his tremendous confidence in himself as a manipulator of men was slightly impaired. He was in the most difficult moral quandary that he had ever been in. He could not decently escape from it without help. But could he rely on his power over anybody?

III.

STILL, after all he was well served. In less than a quarter of an hour a taxi stopped at the pavement, and two people emerged from it—Miss Hummel and St. John. St. John, a fashionably and ceremonially dressed man of forty, with an immaculate silk hat over greying hair, and manner to match, was Ralph's principal secretary. (There were other secretaries, but they had no share in the events under narration.)

"Here, what's this?" Ralph inquired brusquely. "I didn't ask for two of you."

"Sorry, sir," said St. John. "The message was that you wanted your secretary, and as we didn't know which, both Miss Hummel and I came."

"The message was for Miss Hummel," said Ralph. "But she wasn't at home."

"Sorry, sir," St. John repeated, showing absolutely no trace of the thought ever present in his mind that, whereas he was a Balliol man, his employer's father had been a working potter.

"No, keep the taxi," said Ralph to St. John, who was feeling in his pocket. "Miss Hummel, stroll down there and take the number of that policeman."

Miss Hummel strolled. Ralph did not want the policeman's number; he only wanted to speak to St. John alone. He continued:—

"St. John, it would be a great convenience to me, and perhaps to you too, if you'd get that affair over and propose to the young woman and marry her. I'll give you a flat-ful of furniture for a wedding present. She's spoiling."

St. John smiled and blushed.

"Very good of you, sir. I know you wish us well."

"Think about it. I don't want you now. Thanks for coming."

St. John got back into the taxi and departed, having dutifully displayed no anxiety as to the reasons of the great man for sending for a secretary to meet him in the middle of Grosvenor Place—and waiting for the secretary. Him—waiting!

Nor was Miss Hummel any less discreet. She gave the policeman's number, and also wrote it down on her tablets, and then waited with dignity for ukases.

Her father and grandfather had been Colonial judges. Ralph liked to be served by members of the ruling classes. She was thirty, plain, a fatalist, and had no notion of making the best of herself by means of clothes.

Ralph was one of those men who can confess themselves only to women. He would confess himself shamelessly to Miss Hummel on nearly every subject except his wife. Miss Hummel liked it, had lived for it until the excellences of Mr. St. John had begun to affect her.

Ralph had meant to tell her of his fearful quandary. But confronted by her calm, expectant face and her shabby gloves, he suddenly knew that he could not. Miss Hummel

had many most admirable qualities, but not that of greatness of soul. The scale of her soul was restricted, and Ralph felt that the first necessity for him was to be understood, and that only a great soul would be capable of understanding his unique predicament, and the nature of those invisible barriers which prevented him from leaving the pavement in the middle of Grosvenor Place until a 99 bus came up to remove him. His intention had been to discuss ways and means with the usually resourceful Miss Hummel, but he couldn't begin, in practice, without disclosing the awful secret of the quandary; and so he did not begin.

His brain, impeded therefore in one direction, jumped off in another, and, working furiously, soon informed him that the sole way out of the quandary was to invoke the highest possible human aid.

He was an extremely influential man, and enjoyed the friendship or the acquaintance of nearly all the other extremely influential men in London. And he used them and expected them to use him. Thus, if he needed at a day's notice a suite on a crowded liner, he would start at the top and ring up the chairman of the line and say: "See here, Alfred, I want a——" And he would assuredly get it. This system has its advantages, but few can make it work. Ralph now determined on a course of amazing audacity—even for him. He would send for the sublime overlord of all the passenger traffic in the streets of London, a personage so lofty, so recondite, so hidden in mysterious clouds of authority that not one bus-driver in five hundred had ever even set eyes on him, a personage who controlled and co-ordinated tubes and buses and even taxi-owning companies, and whose name caused dozens of company directors to tremble.

Ralph stopped a taxi.

"Miss Hummel," said he, speaking with slow solemnity and emphasizing his words with smacks of the right hand on the palm of the left. "You will go to Sir John Hipwood—you know, the general offices—and you will insist on seeing him at once, no matter what he is doing. You understand—no matter what he is doing."

"Yes, sir."

"You will ask him to come to me at once, *at once*, here, *here*. Tell him I want to see him on a matter of the very greatest urgency, and that I rely on him. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

Miss Hummel sprang into the taxi.

"Hi!" Ralph halted the moving cab, and added, through the open window, "And I rely on *you*."

"Yes, sir."

After he had been striding up and down the pavement for what seemed to be about thirteen hours and was, in fact, about half an hour, someone touched him lightly on the shoulder. It was Lady Furber, cheerful, agreeable, infinitesimally pert and ironic.

"Here, Rafie," she smiled. "You'll probably be here for quite a long time, unless I'm mistaken in you. I know you'll be hungry soon, so I've brought you some sandwiches from a Lyons'. I've chosen the perambulator."

Before he knew it he was holding a white packet. Lady Furber passed prudently on.

"Great heavens and Scott!" hissed Lord Furber, and pitched the packet fiercely over some green hoardings into a temporary enclosure that encumbered the middle of this particular isle of refuge in the middle of Grosvenor Place.

IV.

A CAR drove up, and out stepped Sir John Hipwood. An older man than Ralph, his hair and moustache were white, though perhaps prematurely. Without doubt he was under sixty. His expression showed benevolence and a thoughtful habit of mind. His eyes were soft and liquid (so different from the blazing, challenging orbs of Ralph), set in a broad, cautious face that all the time contradicted them.

"Jack!" said Ralph, in his deep voice. "This is very decent of you, awfully decent. I knew I could count on you. I'm grateful."

"Not at all," said Sir John, deprecatingly.

"Yes, I am. I'm sure it must have been d——d inconvenient for you to come like this." And Ralph, while in secret dwelling proudly on the fact that he, once a working engineer, had now influence enough to drag such a Titan as Jack Hipwood out of all his engagements without any explanation whatever, was indeed quite emotionally grateful to Jack.

"Not a bit!" Jack assured him warmly. "Not a bit inconvenient. I'm only too glad to be of use." Then his tone became much graver and more compassionate, as to one who was in the very last ditch. "But what's the matter? And why are you waiting here in the street? Come along with me to the Yacht Club. We can talk in the card-room at this time." He looked at his watch.

"Jack, listen to me. Bear with me. You're one of the few men who'll understand. And I'll tell you why I can't go to the Yacht Club—why I can't even get into your car and talk there."

When he chose, Ralph could be a very dramatic and persuasive talker, and Jack, already affected by the exordium, patted him sympathetically on the shoulder. Nevertheless, Ralph felt fully the immensity of the

task before him. He saw clearly that if he did not succeed in it, and succeed completely, he would make himself completely ridiculous. He therefore mustered all his powers for the narration of the quandary.

"That's how I'm fixed, Jack, my lad," he ended. "And that's why I can't leave here except in a 99 bus. What I have said I have said and I'm bound by it."

Sir John Hipwood's reaction was rather spectacular. He turned away, roaring with laughter—so much so that his pink skin deepened to purple and people stopped to look at him. He walked a dozen paces and then back, and faced Lord Furber, still laughing; then he wiped the tears from his eyes.

"And what is my *rôle* supposed to be in this affair?" he demanded, somewhat curtly, the laughter having finished as suddenly as it had begun.

"I want you to give orders for a 99 bus to be put on. But, of course, it's got to be a real 99, with the proper label on it—a public bus—none of your 'Private' labels, hire department. It's got to ply for hire, and follow the right 99 route, with a proper conductor and all. I must play the game properly. No hanky-panky with myself. I'll pay all expenses."

"No!" said Jack, with increased curtness.

"No? But believe me, Jack, it's a very serious thing for me. It's everything to me. My self-respect is at stake. I said it, and I said it to my wife, and I've got to stick to it. You're my friend, and you can save me. What's the good of knowing great men if you can't make use of them in a crisis?"

"Crisis be hanged!" cried Sir John Hipwood, who was gradually losing his benevolence and showing that he was just as accustomed as Ralph to being top dog. "Crisis be hanged!" He moderated his tone. "Now look here, Ralph. You say I'm your friend. I am. Take the advice of a friend. You walk right off this pavement and go home—it isn't five minutes off. Go to your wife and say to her just these words: 'Maidie, I'm a fool.' Tell her I told you to. She won't crow over you. She's fine, Maidie is, and there isn't a mean streak in her."

Lord Furber replied quietly and collectedly—his demeanour was a masterpiece of self-control:—

"You mean all that?"

"I mean it. Not only will I not send a bus for you, but I'll give positive orders that a bus must not be sent."

"Well, then, you're a dirty dog, Hipwood!" Ralph retorted, calmly and bitterly savage.

Sir John bit his lip and responded:—

"The matter with you is that you're an overbearing idiot, Furber. You think you own the earth, but you've got to learn that you don't. You've made a fool of yourself, and you think because you're the mighty Furber you can evade the consequences. It just happens this time that you can't. You're beaten—and a good thing too, for this once. You talk about your self-respect, but self-conceit is what's the matter with you. 'What you have said you have said!' Bosh! I say Bosh! And here you have the infernal impudence to take me away from my business on this fool's errand. D'you know that I broke up a directors' meeting to come to you, and put off a lunch, too, because I thought you were in trouble—real trouble? I never dreamed I was being summoned by a swollen-headed lunatic." At this point Sir John relented. "Forgive me, old thing," said he coaxingly. "Mustn't lose our sense of humour. Come along with me now and I'll stand you a lunch."

Ralph's answer was to walk away, with a lowering face. The next moment Sir John Hipwood drove off in his car.

Ralph had not moved a dozen paces when he saw the patiently waiting Miss Hummel. He laughed shortly.

"Miss Hummel," he addressed her in calm tones, as though nothing had happened. "You did very well, very well indeed. Now go back to the City and get Mr. St. John. Tell him he is to go down with you to the 'General' depot at Battersea. I know there's about sixty old motor-buses for sale there. Tell him to buy one and pay cash and see it's in going order. Make them lend you a conductor and a driver—they always have emergency reserves—and borrow two '99' number boards, and come right back here with it. Don't spare money. If bribes are needed, give them. Doesn't matter how much. Got it? Got it all?"

"Yes, sir," said the imperturbable.

V.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD FURBER suddenly felt very hungry—even to the point of physical weakness. He felt also that he had supported long enough the rigours of Grosvenor Place and needed a little privacy. Such were his reasons for nosing round the green-painted enclosure, rather in the manner of a dog excited by hopes. He then heard a strange tapping within the enclosure. His next act was to knock on the door of the enclosure, which bore an authority from the London County Council to exist up to a certain

date; the date was already passed, but the enclosure continued to exist.

A grey-bearded man, clothed in white from head to foot and holding a chisel, appeared at the door.

"My man— —" Lord Furber began, benevolently.

"Something wrong there," the greybeard interrupted him. "So far as I know I'm not your man."

"I beg your pardon," Lord Furber apologized. "I thought you were a workman."

"So I am," said the greybeard, "and I hope you are too."

"Certainly," agreed his lordship quickly. "I'm sorry to trouble you, but I'm afraid I threw a packet of sandwiches into your wigwam a short while ago."

"Why are you afraid?" the greybeard inquired. "Either you did or you didn't—you must know. If you mean that you are afraid *because* you threw the packet on my head, that's all right. You ought to be, now that I see you. When the packet fell I thought it came from Providence—or from the devil. Probably the latter. I thought it had been sent to tempt me from my hygienic brown bread."

"Go to your wife and say to her: 'Maidie, I'm a fool.'"

"May I have it?"

"No, you mayn't," said the greybeard. "I regret to say that the temptation was too strong for me, and I ate your sandwiches—all of them, and am now suffering from the inevitable indigestion. I don't blame you. I only blame myself. But you can have the brown bread. Here it is."

Lord Furber, after some hesitation, took the brown bread.

"Of course, I couldn't eat it inside here?"

"You're wrong again. Of course you could eat it inside. Come in."

Lord Furber gave thanks and entered the enclosure, and was relieved to see that he was still on pavement. A large group of statuary occupied the middle of the enclosure.

"Very fine," observed Lord Furber, amiably.

"Only posterity can decide that," said the greybeard. "Now make yourself at home while you eat. I don't know who you are, and I don't care."

"I'm Lord Furber."

"Who's he? Never heard of him."

"Don't you read the papers?"

"Of course I don't. I haven't looked at a paper since the day after I was elected to the Royal Academy."

"Oh! Perhaps I ought to say——"

"No, you oughtn't," said the greybeard, firmly. He began to knock chips off the statuary. "I'm just putting the finishing touches to this shameless young woman, and I desire you to follow the example of Renan's barber. When the barber asked Renan how he would like his hair cut, Renan answered, 'In silence.' I want you to eat my brown bread in silence. I'm engaged and mustn't be disturbed."

Lord Furber, with a deplorable lack of self-control, pitched the whole of the brown bread full in the face of the shameless girl and left the enclosure. No sooner was he outside than he regretted the rash act. But he impartially saw that a man must abide by the consequences of the defects of his qualities.

His sole sustenance was now the

self-induced, joyous conviction that St. John and Miss Hummel might arrive at any minute with the bus, driver, and conductor.

About an hour later he noticed a group of idlers staring at him from the opposite side of the roadway, by the gates of Constitution Hill. He swung round. From the west also groups of idlers were staring at him. The groups waxed in size and came nearer to him. He thought hard, and would have retreated into the enclosure; but the door of the enclosure was forbidden to him by an invisible barrier. Then, gazing across to the corner by St. George's Hospital, he descried a newspaper poster: "Strange Freak of a Millionaire Peer." And another: "Lord Furber's Dilemma." (The poster of his own newspaper, *The Echo*, said: "Bloodhound Hunt for Girl's Murderer.")

He blushed; he wished to sink down through the earth to the Antipodes; then he cursed, swore, shrugged his shoulders, and grew brazen again. He especially anathematized Jack, who must have been talking at a late lunch.

A young man approached. "I'm from *The Standard*."

"D'you know I own *The Echo?*"

"Yes, my lord."

"Dog doesn't eat dog," said Lord Furber oracularly.

"I only thought you might care to tell me——"

"DOG DOESN'T EAT DOG," thundered Lord Furber. "Get off!"

He was obeyed.

The multitudes of quidnuncs were still waxing. The policeman, a new one, had to begin to handle them—always with tact. Three photographers came, one after another, and snapped Lord Furber. But Lord Furber had tenacity, and held doggedly to the theory that everybody in the world was mad except himself.

Then Miss Hummel—alone. No St. John.

"We've bought the bus, my lord."

"And how soon will it be here?"

"It isn't coming, my lord. The police licence for it was withdrawn when it was put up for sale. We can't get a new one for four days, and no driver will take the bus without a licence."

After a terrible pause, during which Ralph's face underwent the most shocking contortions, Lord Furber said with an affrighting imitation of calm:—

"You'd better get away if you value your life, Miss Hummel. Come back in an hour. I shall be here."

In less than a minute Lady Furber herself arrived. Ralph glared at her.

"Come to keep you company a bit, Ralph," she said. "Sandwiches all right?"

"Fine," said Ralph.

"Good. I must tell you about the pram."

She seemed to accept the situation as though it was perfectly ordinary. She did not argue, cajole, nor complain. She was richly experienced in Ralph.

VI.

RALPH'S face was enigmatic. He smiled to himself, and occasionally even snorted a kind of monosyllabic laugh. But his feelings were terrible; they included despair. He did not know what to do; he only knew that he could not and would not give in. He saw nothing for it but a lingering death on the pavement, and such was his silly, grandiose, tremendous character that he was not unprepared for this, because a surrender was inconceivable to him. He had never surrendered.

At the same time he clearly realized the vast extent of his folly. But he happened to be of those few who are ready to pay honestly for their follies. Meanwhile he walked to and fro the full length of the pavement, and at intervals right round the three sides of the pavement. And Maidie walked with him; and he said not a word to her. Still, he saw that she was a great wife. She withstood the ordeal of the ever-increasing crowds perfectly—better even than Ralph. They were now quite accustomed to being pointed at, and to hearing: "That's him," and "That's her." Or, "Is *that* him? Good heavens!"

Then there was a strange diversion. Three young men hurried past; one carried a saxophone, one a sort of flageolet, and one a kettledrum. Ralph for one appalling moment thought that some newspaper (not his own)—perhaps *The Evening Press*—had engaged them to serenade. The *Press* would be capable of anything. However, they passed on, winding through the throng, towards Victoria, and the diversion ended.

"Look!" said Maidie suddenly; they were now at the extreme south of the pavement and could see the string of buses climbing the hill.

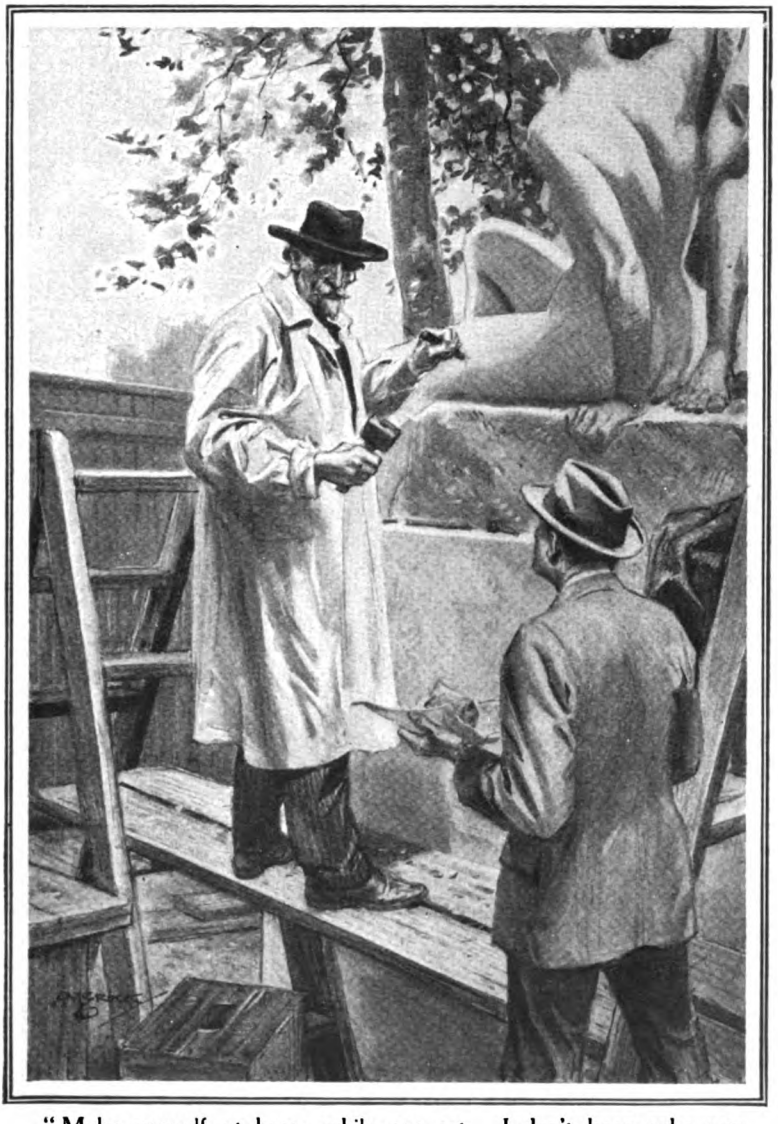
Ralph looked, and beheld on the forehead of one bus the number 99! It was not a "General." It was what people very unjustly called a "pirate." Its colour was a brilliant green, and it belonged to the "Emerald" tribe of motor-buses. A heavenly and triumphant satisfaction permeated the whole soul of Lord Furber. He had held out, and he had won.

"You did this," he said to Maidie.

"Well, my lad," said she, "I thought of it."

"And why I didn't think of it myself absolutely beats me," said Lord Furber.

Lady Furber was very happy. She heard no praise with her ears, but in her heart she plainly heard the unspoken, enthusiastic



"Make yourself at home while you eat. I don't know who you are, and I don't care."

"I'm Lord Furber."

"Who's he? Never heard of him."

laudations of his lordship. The 99 came nearer—the gallant lifeboat of his lordship's self-respect. But music was soaring from its roof. The trio of musicians had boarded it and were playing "I Want to Be Happy" with an amazing stridency, and flowing from the trumpet end of the saxophone was a long streamer with the words "*Evening Press.*"

The multitude of gapers gave an immense roar of delighted cheers. Those nearest the bus made way for Lord Furber to mount. But Lord Furber turned his back on the bus, and, accompanied by his wife, walked right off the pavement towards Belgrave Square. He was laughing.

"Dog does eat dog after all," said he.

"It *is* a shame!" said Lady Furber, with the full vivacity of her red hair. "But you've won, Rafie, really."

"*You* have, wench!" said he. And after a pause: "But I'll get even with the *Press.*"

This was not the right spirit. If he had understood the only way to happiness he would have forgiven the *Press.*

PICTURES THAT APPEAL

A COLLECTION OF MODERN MASTERPIECES

THERE is probably no "oldest inhabitant" who does not remember when England was going to perdition. Strangely enough, there must be none, either, who can recall when the artistic taste of our people had reached such a high level. Perhaps the paradox will not be generally conceded, but, at any rate, one cannot be prevented from deriving a certain comfort from the reflection. Culture, after all, is a deadly enemy of decay.

One thinks of these things in contemplating the steady growth of interest in pictures. Increasing numbers of people flock to the public galleries; the capacity to appreciate the best in art, once the exclusive possession of a comparative few, has become more and more a common heritage.

It is, of course, a development that the progress of education has made inevitable — not mere academic accomplishment, but rather the broadening of the mind that education brings, and a deeper appreciation of beauty wherever it is to be found.

In the succeeding pages are reproductions of pictures that have attracted widespread notice. One has not attempted the venturesome task of selecting the world's greatest examples of art. Technical excellence—remarkable as it is in each of the canvases chosen—has influenced one less than simple human appeal. That, indisputably, is what the multitude searches for, and its sureness of instinct in this respect is often astonishing.

The last Academy Exhibition provided several examples of this. Perhaps one of the most outstanding was Mr. C. Spencelayh's painting, "The Old Dealer." It is merely a typical interior of an antique dealer's shop that the artist has given us. All the accustomed endless variety of goods, from a grandfather's clock to stuffed animals in cages, is there, and all the riotous disorder of such a place. In the centre, the old dealer himself, a characteristic figure, is smiling good-humouredly as he busily furbishes up a bird cage with a coat of paint.

The scene would be prosaic enough in unimaginative hands. There is little poetry in tables and chairs, yet this picture, with its deft arrangement of colour, is full of soul. Mr. Spencelayh has looked at a difficult subject with the vision of the true artist, and instantly it springs to life, revealing beauty where it might be imagined to be non-existent. It is paintings of this simple human type that arrest the attention, and it is not surprising that while it was hanging in the Academy it was almost constantly surrounded by admirers.

Another picture that attracted considerable notice was one bearing the title, "Children's Ward, St. Thomas's Hospital," by Mr. Charles Sims, R.A. The reason is exactly the same. True, Mr. Sims has played upon totally different emotions, but he has gone to life itself for his inspiration, to the poignant side of life as it may be seen any day in our hospitals.

On the balcony of St. Thomas's is a suffering child in his cot. Over him bends a doctor, and the child is smiling at him in that serenely happy way that is the priceless prerogative of infant innocence. A nurse stands near, and the young occupant of a neighbouring cot looks curiously on. In the background the Thames flows on its course, and we have a glimpse of the ceaseless press of traffic on Westminster Bridge.

Mr. Sims has departed in this case from the character of picture to which he has accustomed us. "I just painted it because I felt I wanted to paint it," he said. Without being maudlin or sentimental, he has imparted to it a world of pathos—the suffering child, the succouring doctor, and that vital glimpse a few yards away of humanity hastening by, unheeding because life leaves so little time to heed.

There must be few people who are not familiar with the snow scenes of Mr. Joseph

THE TWO CROWNS.
By Sir Frank Dicksee, P.R.A.

By permission of Frost & Reed, Ltd., Bristol, publishers of the engraving.

Farquharson, R.A. It is a chilly subject, and there is the added difficulty, from an artistic point of view, of monotony of colour. Life and warmth would seem to be impossible in such circumstances, yet Mr. Farquharson has solved the problem with a success never achieved, probably, by any other artist. His secret, of course, is lighting effect.

The title of the example reproduced here is "Glowed with the Tint of Evening's Hour." We have a typical winter scene in the country. A river winds its way between snow-covered banks, and there are black, gaunt-looking trees, with a lonely road rutted by deep cart-tracks. The place of Mr. Farquharson's characteristic sheep is taken by birds. It is a fascinating spectacle that the snow-lover would go far to see, and it is made more beautiful still by the gentle flood of light from the setting sun.

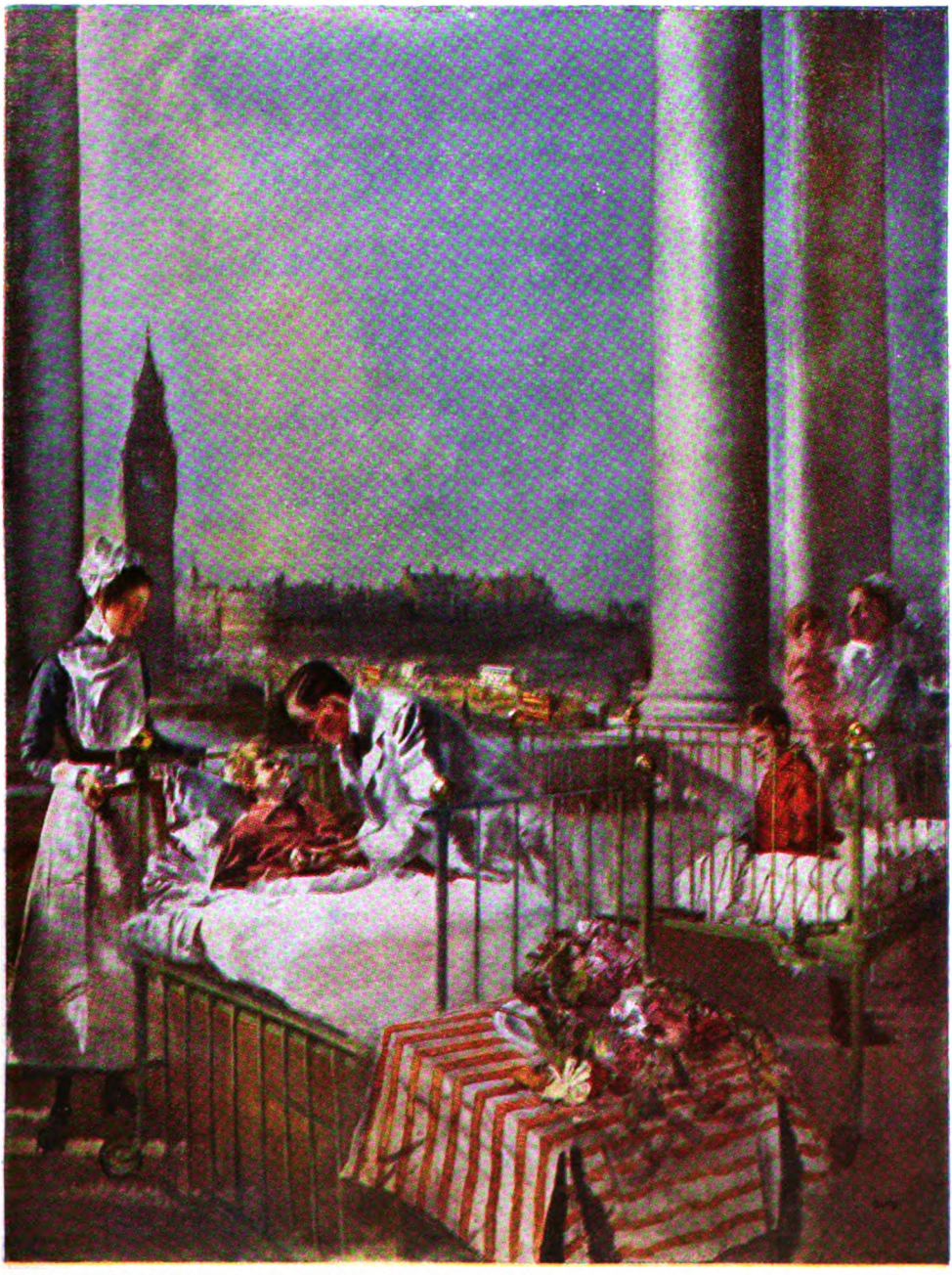
If we next look upon Miss Beatrice Parsons' picture, "In a Sussex Garden," the magic carpet of art transports us in an instant from the atmosphere of winter to the sunshine and flowers of summer. Here we have Nature in a mood of joy. One does not need to be told that Miss Parsons is a sincere lover of flowers; the evidence is

THE OLD DEALER.
By Charles Spencelayh.

By permission of the Artist. The original painting in the private collection of Joseph Levy, Esq., of Manchester.

IN A SUSSEX GARDEN.
By [illegible]

By permission of Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd



CHILDREN'S WARD, ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL. *By permission of the Artist.*
By Charles Sims. R.A.

here. It is the soul of a garden that she has expressed; its throb and its gladness. One longs to feel the soft mush of that ribbon of green under the feet, and to be in actual touch with those roses, and marguerites, and Michaelmas daisies, and foxgloves, and the score of other denizens of this little corner of heaven.

We have Nature, again, in Mr. Sutton Palmer's striking canvas, "Evening Light." Mr. Palmer has gone to the beauty of lakes, as he so often does, for his inspiration. We are shown the quiet and solitude of an alcove cut off, as it were, from civilization. There is no sign of life—just the trees and the water. The note of solitude is accentuated

EVENING LIGHT.
By Sutton Palmer.

By permission of Frost & Reed, Ltd., Bristol, publishers of the engraving.

by the shadows of evening, but there is a fine effect as the light falls on some of the trees, throwing the silver gleam of the birches into bold relief.

Sir Frank Dicksee, P.R.A., has done few better things than "The Two Crowns," which was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1899. It was afterwards purchased for the nation under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest, and may now be seen in the Tate Gallery.

The picture contains an element of symbolism. The artist deals with the problems that have tormented men for ages past. Shall it be glory or renunciation? The world, and all that it means, or devotion to a religious ideal?

A young conqueror returns to his people wearing a golden crown and arrayed in pompous apparel. Proud of his deeds, he rides in state among his people, who acclaim him, and strew his path with roses. Intoxicated by the glamour and pomp of it all he slowly makes his way along until suddenly his glance falls upon a crucifix by the wayside. Instantly he realizes the difference between the Crown of Thorns and his own crown of

"GLOWED WITH THE TINT OF EVENING'S HOUR."
By Joseph Farquharson, R.A.

By permission of Frost & Reed, Ltd., Bristol, publishers of the engraving.

SEA MELODIES.
By Herbert Draper.

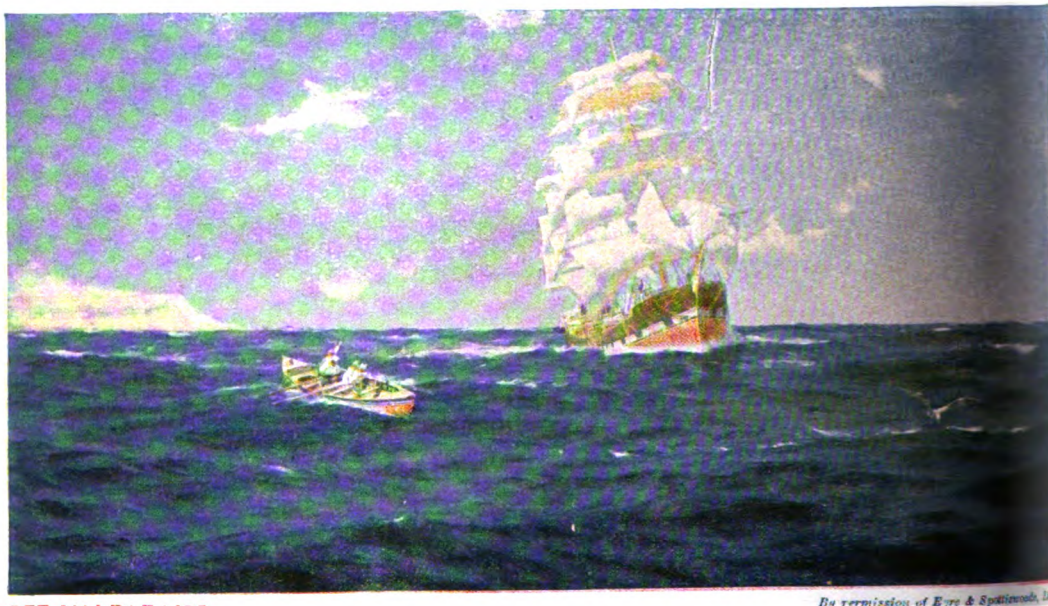
By permission of Frost & Reed, Ltd., Bristol, publishers of the engraving.

gold. He is at the parting of the ways, and we are left to conjecture whether this young man who has tasted nearly all the joys of life will abandon them in the name of something higher.

Such a subject lends itself well to the painter's brush. The canvas, with its splashes of gold and scarlet, relieved by the white contrast of the horse, is vivid to a degree. Sir Frank Dicksee has succeeded in a masterly way in the task of suggesting at once the triumphant mien of the conqueror and the spiritual frailty of the man.

"Sea Melodies" is a typical example of the art of Mr. Herbert Draper. His skill in imparting to the human form something of the poetry of a mermaid is almost uncanny. In this case two maidens with streaming tresses are clinging to a rock on which a third figure is playing a pipe instrument. All are in the shadow, while in the distance a flood of sunlight pours down. The richness of colour and beauty of outline at once arouse admiration. The picture is well named. It is in truth a melody of the sea.

Another sea picture, wholly different in type, is Mr. Somerscales' famous "Off Valparaiso," which is hung in the Tate Gallery. Here we have the spaciousness of the bounding main, and a sailing ship in full rig ploughing gaily on her way. The



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OFF VALPARAISO.
By Thomas Somerscales.

water is a real blue, and glorious sunshine lights up the vessel's sails and the land in the distance, giving the painting brightness and lure. Few people see "Off Valparaiso" without lingering over it. Just the sea and a ship, yet there is something in the atmosphere of this picture that makes the heart of an Englishman leap. It brings the limitless ocean to him, and the breeze, and the roving life of the sailor.

Kittens are excellent friends to painters of sympathy and understanding, yielding in every line a maximum of interest, not to say amusement. It is doubtful whether Pussy has any sense of humour, but it would be difficult to name any animal that can give more point to a little mischief-making, or make prettier play with a front paw. In Augusta A. Talboys' picture, "The Last Move," the front paw is well in evidence.

The artist has chosen a particularly beautiful type of the feline species, for these are no ordinary kittens, but kittens of high degree; they are, in fact, the

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WINIFRED, DAUGHTER OF MAJOR AND MRS. J. B. PAGET.
By I. M. Cohen, R.O.I.

BARBARA, DAUGHTER OF J. W. HILL, ESQ.
By F. Cadogan Cowper, A.R.A.

By permission of the Artist.

rare Blue Persians. The chess-board provides an excellent foil to the spirit of playfulness. Immediately one's mind conjures up a vision of the mental torture of two serious players who will return presently to find that their beloved pieces have been toys for kittens.

A famous foreign artist once remarked that the tradition of portrait painting in this country has no counterpart in any other part of the world, and that abroad it is a constant source of envy. It is a tradition peculiar to the English temperament, and artistically it has had remarkable results. Two charming examples by popular painters of women are given here, one being "Miss Barbara Hill," by Mr. F. Cadogan Cowper, A.R.A., distinguished for his rendering of beautiful society women; and the other, Miss Winifred Paget, by Mr. I. M. Cohen, R.O.I., equally well known for his studies of young English girlhood.

THE LAST MOVE.
By Augusta A. Talboys.

By permission of Frost & Reed, Ltd., Bristol, publishers of the engraving.

"Take that thing away!"

The PEARL of LOVE

By H. G. WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES ROBINSON

THE pearl is lovelier than the most brilliant of crystalline stones, the moralist declares, because it is made through the suffering of a living creature. About that I can say nothing because I feel none of the fascination of pearls. Their cloudy lustre moves me not at all. Nor can I decide for myself upon that age-long dispute whether the Pearl of Love is the cruellest of stories or only a gracious fable of the immortality of beauty.

Both the story and the controversy will be familiar to students of mediæval Persian prose. The story is a short one, though the commentary upon it is a respectable part of the literature of that period. They have treated it as a poetic invention and they have treated it as an allegory meaning this, that, or the other thing. Theologians have had their copious way with it, dealing with it particularly as concerning the restoration of the body after death, and it has been greatly used as a parable by those who write about æsthetics. And many have held it to be the statement of a fact, simply and baldly true.

The story is laid in North India, which is the most fruitful soil for sublime love stories of all the lands in the world. It was in a country of sunshine and lakes and rich forests and hills and fertile valleys; and far away the great mountains hung in the sky, peaks, crests, and ridges of inaccessible and eternal snow. There was a young Prince, lord of all the land; and he found a maiden of indescribable beauty and delightfulness and he made her his Queen and laid his heart at her feet. Love was theirs, full of joys and sweetness, full of hope, exquisite, brave, and marvellous love, beyond anything you have ever dreamt of love. It was theirs for a year and a part of a year; and then suddenly, because of some venomous sting that came to her in a thicket, she died.

She died and for a while the Prince was utterly prostrated. He was silent and motionless with grief. They feared he might kill himself, and he had neither sons nor brothers to succeed him. For two days and nights he lay upon his face, fasting, across the foot of the couch which bore her calm and lovely body. Then he arose and ate, and went about very quietly like one who has taken a great resolution. He caused her body to be put in a coffin of lead mixed with silver, and for that he had an outer coffin made of the most precious and scented woods wrought with gold, and about that there was to be a sarcophagus

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of alabaster, inlaid with precious stones. And while these things were being done he spent his time for the most part by the pools and in the garden-houses and pavilions and groves and in those chambers in the palace where they two had been most together, brooding upon her loveliness. He did not rend his garments nor defile himself with ashes and sackcloth as the custom was, for his love was too great for such extravagances. At last he came forth again among his councillors and before the people, and told them what he had a mind to do.

He said he could never more touch women, he could never more think of them, and so he would find a seemly youth to adopt for his heir and train him to his task, and that he would do his princely duties as became him; but that, for the rest of it, he would give himself with all his power and all his strength and all his wealth, all that he could command, to make a monument worthy of his incomparable, dear, lost mistress, a building it should be of perfect grace and beauty, more marvellous than any other building had ever been or could ever be, so that to the end of time it should be a wonder, and men would treasure it and speak of it and desire to see it and come from all the lands of the earth to visit it, and recall the name and the memory of his Queen. And this building he said was to be called the Pearl of Love.

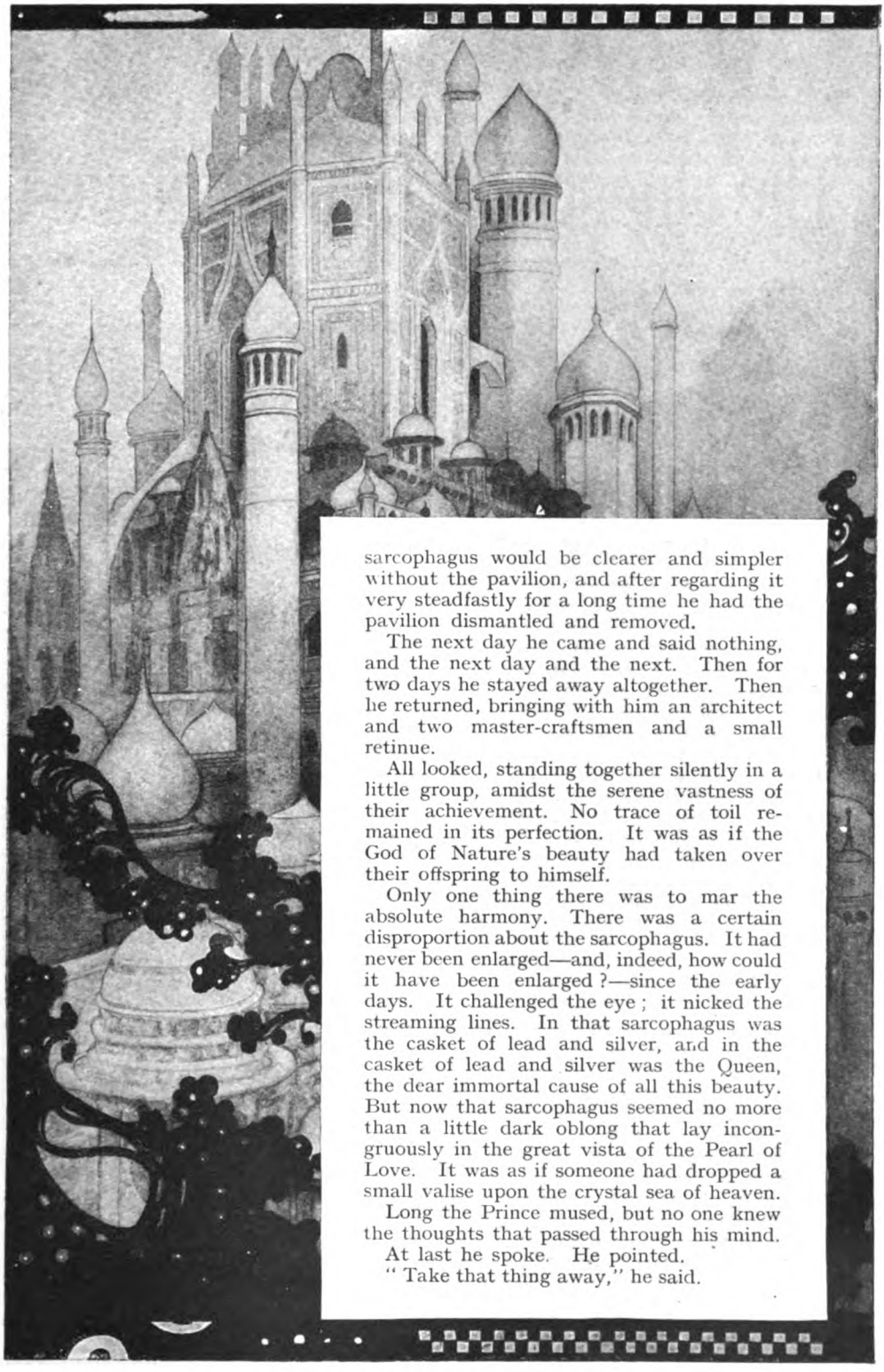
And this his councillors and people permitted him to do, and so he did.

YEAR followed year, and all the years he devoted himself to building and adorning the Pearl of Love. A great foundation was hewn out of the living rock in a place whence one seemed to be looking at the snowy wildernesses of the great mountain across the valley of the world. Villages and hills there were, a winding river, and very far away three great cities. Here they put the sarcophagus of alabaster beneath a pavilion of cunning workmanship; and about it there were set pillars of strange and lovely stone and wrought and fretted walls, and a great casket of masonry bearing a dome and pinnacles and cupolas, as exquisite as a jewel. At first the design of the Pearl of Love was less bold and subtle than it became later. At first it was smaller and more wrought and encrusted; there were many pierced screens and delicate clusters of rosy-hued pillars, and the sarcophagus lay like a child that sleeps among flowers. The first dome was covered with green tiles, framed and held together by silver, but this was taken away again because it seemed close, because it did not soar grandly enough for the broadening imagination of the Prince.

For by this time he was no longer the graceful youth who had loved the girl Queen. He was now a man, grave and intent, wholly set upon the building of the Pearl of Love. With every year of effort he had learnt new possibilities in arch and wall and buttress; he had acquired greater power over the material he had to use and he had learnt of a hundred stones and hues and effects that he could never have thought of in the beginning. His sense of colour had grown finer and colder; he cared no more for the enamelled gold-lined brightness that had pleased him first, the brightness of an illuminated missal; he sought now for blue colourings like the sky and for the subtle hues of great distances, for recondite shadows and sudden broad floods of purple opalescence and for grandeur and space. He wearied altogether of carvings and pictures and inlaid ornamentation and all the little careful work of men. "Those were pretty things," he said of his earlier decorations; and had them put aside into subordinate buildings where they would not hamper his main design. Greater and greater grew his artistry. With awe and amazement people saw the Pearl of Love sweeping up from its first beginnings to a superhuman breadth and height and magnificence. They did not know clearly what they had expected, but never had they expected so sublime a thing as this. "Wonderful are the miracles," they whispered, "that love can do," and all the women in the world, whatever other loves they had, loved the Prince for the splendour of his devotion.

Through the middle of the building ran a great aisle, a vista, that the Prince came to care for more and more. From the inner entrance of the building he looked along the length of an immense pillared gallery and across the central area from which the rose-hued columns had long since vanished, over the top of the pavilion under which lay the sarcophagus, through a marvellously designed opening, to the snowy wildernesses of the great mountain, the Lord of all Mountains, two hundred miles away. The pillars and arches and buttresses and galleries soared and floated on either side, perfect yet unobtrusive, like great archangels waiting in the shadows about the presence of God. When men saw that austere beauty for the first time they were exalted, and then they shivered and their hearts bowed down.

Very often would the Prince come to stand there and look at that vista, deeply moved and not yet fully satisfied. The Pearl of Love had still something for him to do, he felt, before his task was done. Always he would order some little alteration to be made or some recent alteration to be put back again. And one day he said that the



sarcophagus would be clearer and simpler without the pavilion, and after regarding it very steadfastly for a long time he had the pavilion dismantled and removed.

The next day he came and said nothing, and the next day and the next. Then for two days he stayed away altogether. Then he returned, bringing with him an architect and two master-craftsmen and a small retinue.

All looked, standing together silently in a little group, amidst the serene vastness of their achievement. No trace of toil remained in its perfection. It was as if the God of Nature's beauty had taken over their offspring to himself.

Only one thing there was to mar the absolute harmony. There was a certain disproportion about the sarcophagus. It had never been enlarged—and, indeed, how could it have been enlarged?—since the early days. It challenged the eye; it nicked the streaming lines. In that sarcophagus was the casket of lead and silver, and in the casket of lead and silver was the Queen, the dear immortal cause of all this beauty. But now that sarcophagus seemed no more than a little dark oblong that lay incongruously in the great vista of the Pearl of Love. It was as if someone had dropped a small valise upon the crystal sea of heaven.

Long the Prince mused, but no one knew the thoughts that passed through his mind.

At last he spoke. He pointed.

"Take that thing away," he said.

THE LAND OF MIST

OR

The Quest of Edward Malone

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

ILLUSTRATED BY
F. E. HILEY

XI.

WHERE SILAS LINDEN ENTERS INTO HIS OWN.

SILAS LINDEN, prize-fighter and fake-medium, had had some great days in his life—days crowded with incident for good or evil. There was the time when he had backed Rosalind at a hundred to one in the Oaks and had spent twenty-four hours of brutal debauchery on the strength of it. There was the day also when his favourite right upper-cut had connected in most accurate and rhythmical fashion with the protruded chin of Bull Wardell of Whitechapel, whereby Silas put himself in the way of a Lonsdale Cup and a try for the Championship. But never in all his varied career had he such a day as this supreme one, so it is worth our while to follow him to the end of it. Fanatical believers have urged that it is dangerous to cross the path of spiritual things when the heart is not clean. Silas Linden's name might be added to their list of examples, but his cup of sin was full and overflowing before the judgment fell.

He emerged from the room of Algernon Mailey with every reason to know that Lord John Roxton's grip was as muscular as ever. In the excitement of the struggle he had hardly realized his injuries, but now he stood outside the door with his hand to his bruised throat and a hoarse stream of oaths pouring through it. His breast was aching also where Malone had planted his knee, and even the successful blow which had struck Mailey down had brought retribution, for it had jarred that injured hand of which he had complained to his brother. Altogether, if Silas Linden was in a most cursed temper there was a very good reason for his mood.

"I'll get you one at a time," he growled, looking back with his angry pigs' eyes at the outer door of the flats. "You wait, my lads, and see!" Then with sudden purpose he swung off down the street.

It was to the Bardsley Square Police Station that he made his way, and he found the jovial, rubicund, black-moustached Inspector Murphy seated at his desk.

"Well, what do *you* want?" asked the Inspector in no very friendly voice.

"I hear you got that medium right and proper."

"Yes, we did. I learn he was your brother."

"That's neither here nor there. I don't hold with such things in any man. But you got your conviction. What is there for me in it?"

"Not a shilling!"

"What? Wasn't it I that gave the information? Where would you have been if I had not given you the office?"

"If there had been a fine we might have allowed you something. We would have got something, too. Mr. Melrose sent him to jail. There is nothing for anybody."

"So you say. I'm damned sure you and those two women got something out of it. Why the hell should I give away my own brother for the sake of the likes of you? You'll find your own bird next time."

Murphy was a choleric man with a sense of his own importance. He was not to be bearded thus in his own seat of office. He rose with a very red face.

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" I'll tell you what, Silas Linden. I could find my own bird and never move out of this room. You had best get out of this quick, or you may chance to stay here longer than you like. We've had complaints of your treatment of those two children of yours, and the children's protection folk are taking an interest. Look out that we don't take an interest, too."

Silas Linden flung out of the room with his temper hotter than ever, and a couple of rum-and-waters on his way home did not help to appease him. On the contrary, he had always been a man who grew more dangerous in his cups. There were many of his trade who refused to drink with him.

SILAS lived in one of a row of small brick houses named Boltons Court, lying at the back of Tottenham Court Road. His was the end house of a *cul-de-sac*, with the side wall of a huge brewery beyond. These dwellings were very small, which was probably the reason why the inhabitants, both adults and children, spent most of their time in the street. Several of the elders were out now, and as Silas passed under the solitary lamp-post they scowled at his thick-set figure, for, though the morality of Boltons Court was of no high order, it was none the less graduated, and Silas was at zero. A tall Jewish woman, Rebecca Levi, thin, aquiline, and fierce-eyed, lived next to the prize-fighter. She was standing at her door now, with a child holding her apron.

" Mr. Linden," she said as he passed, " them children of yours want more care than they get. Little Margaret was in here to-day. That child don't get enough to eat."

" You mind your own business, curse you ! " growled Silas. " I've told you before now not to push that long sheeny beak of yours into my affairs. If you was a man I'd know better how to speak to you."

" If I was a man maybe you wouldn't dare to speak to me so. I says it's a shame, Silas Linden, the way them children is treated. If it's a police-court case, I'll know what to say."

" Oh, go to hell ! " said Silas, and kicked open his own unlatched door. A big frowzy woman with a shock of dyed hair and some remains of a florid beauty, now long over-ripe, looked out from the sitting-room door.

" Oh, it's you, is it ? " said she.

" Who did you think it was ? The Dook of Wellington ? "

" I thought it was a mad bullock, maybe, got strayin' down the lane, and buttin' down our door."

" Funny, ain't you ? "

" Maybe I am, but I hain't got much to be funny about. Not a shillin' in the 'ouse, nor so much as a pint o' beer, and these damned children of yours for ever upsettin' me."

" What have they been a-doin' of ? " asked Silas with a scowl. When this worthy pair could get no change out of each other, they usually united their forces against the children. He had entered the sitting-room and flung himself down in the wooden armchair.

" They've been seein' Number One again."

" How d'ye know that ? "

" I 'eard 'im say somethin' to 'er about it. ' Mother was there,' 'e says. Then afterwards 'e 'ad one o' them sleepy fits."

" It's in the family."

" Yes, it is," retorted the woman. " If you 'adn't sleepy fits you'd get some work to do, like other men."

" Oh, shut it, woman ! What I mean is that my brother Tom gets them fits, and this lad o' mine is said to be the livin' image of his uncle. So he had a trance, had he ? What did you do ? "

The woman gave an evil grin. " I woke him up," said she.

Silas shrugged his shoulders.

" 'Ave a care, my lass ! There is talk of the p'lice. If you are too rough with them, you and I may be in the dock together."

" Silas Linden, you are a fool ! Can't a parent c'rect 'is own child ? "

" Yes, but it ain't *your* own child, and stepmothers has a bad name, see ? There's that Jew woman next door. She saw you when you took the clothes-rope to little Margery last washin'-day. She spoke to me about it, and again to-day about the food."

" What's the matter with the food ? The greedy little bastards ! A bit of real starvin' would do them no 'arm, and I would 'ave less sauce."

" What, has Willie sauced you ? "

" Yes, when 'e woke up."

" Wot did he say ? "

" Cursed me good and proper, 'e did. All about his mother—wot 'is mother would do to me. I'm dam' well sick of 'is mother ! "

" Don't say too much about Amy. She was a good woman."

" So you say now, Silas Linden, but by all accounts you 'ad a queer way of showin' it when she was alive."

" Hold your jaw, woman ! I've had enough to vex me to-day without you startin' your tantrums. You're jealous of the grave. That's wot's the matter with you."

The woman came across and kissed him.

" I've only you, Silas."

"Oh, don't muck me about. I'm not in the mood. Go and fetch Willie in. You can bring Margery also. I've a word or two to say to them."

The woman left the room, but was back in a moment.

"'E's off again!" said she. "It fair gets on my nerves to see him. Come 'ere, Silas! 'Ave a look!"

They went together into the back kitchen. A small fire was smouldering in the grate. Beside it, huddled up in a chair, sat a fair-haired boy of ten. His delicate face was upturned to the ceiling. His eyes were half-closed, and only the whites visible. There was a look of great peace upon his thin spiritual features. In the corner a poor little cowed mite of a girl, a year or two younger, was gazing with sad, frightened eyes at her brother.

"Looks awful, don't 'e?" said the woman. "Don't seem to belong to this world. I wish to God 'e'd make a move for the other. 'E don't do much good 'ere."

"Here, wake up!" cried Silas. "None of your foxin'! Wake up! D'ye hear?" He shook him roughly by the shoulder, but the boy still slumbered on.

"Say!" cried Silas, stroking his stubbled chin as he looked thoughtfully at his son, "I think there is money in this if it is handled to rights. Wot about a turn on the halls, eh? 'The Boy Wonder, or How is it Done?' There's a name for the bills. Then folk know his uncle's name, so they will be able to take him on trust."

"I thought you was goin' into the business yourself."

"That's a wash-out," snarled Silas. "Don't you talk of it. It's finished."

"Been caught out already?"

"I tell you not to talk about it, woman!" the man shouted. "I'm just in the mood to give you the hidin' of your life, so don't you get my goat, or you'll be sorry." He stepped across and pinched the boy's arm with all his force. The child called out in pain, and his sister joined in the outcry.

"You stop that!" cried a voice in the passage.

"It's that infernal Jewess!" said the woman. She went to the kitchen door. "What are you doing in our 'ouse? 'Op it, quick, or it will be the worse for you!"

"If I hear them children cry out once more I'm off for the police."

"Get out of it! 'Op it, I tell you!" The frowzy stepmother bore down in full sail, but the lean, lank Jewess stood her ground. Next instant they met. Mrs. Silas Linden screamed and staggered back with blood running down her face where four nails had left as many red furrows. Silas, with an oath, pushed his wife out of the way, seized the intruder round the waist, and slung her bodily through the door. She lay in the roadway with her long, gaunt limbs sprawling about like some half-slain fowl. Without rising, she shook her clenched hands in the air and screamed curses at Silas, who slammed the door and left her, while neighbours ran from all sides to hear particulars of the fray. Mrs. Linden, staring through the front blind, saw with some relief that her enemy was able to rise and to limp back to her own door, whence she could be heard delivering a long shrill harangue as to her wrongs. The wrongs of a Jew are not lightly forgotten, for the race can both love and hate.

"She's all right, Silas. I thought maybe you 'ad killed 'er."

"It's what she wants, the damned canting sheeny. It's bad enough to have her in the street without her daring to set foot inside my door. Where are them kiddies?"

"They ran up to their room. I heard them lock the door."

"A lot of good that will do them."

"I wouldn't touch 'em now, Silas. The neighbours is all up and about, and we needn't ask for trouble."

"You're right!" he grumbled.

"Where are you goin'?"

"Down to the 'Admiral Vernon.' There's a chance of a job as sparrin' partner to Long Davis. He goes into training on Monday and needs a man of my weight."

"Well, I'll expect you when I see you. I get too much of that pub. of yours. I know what the 'Admiral Vernon' means."

"It means the only place on God's earth where I get any peace or rest," said Silas.

"A fat lot I get—or ever 'ave 'ad since I married you."

"That's right, grouse away!" he growled. "If grousin' made a man happy, you'd be the champion." He picked up his hat and slouched off down the street, his heavy tread resounding upon the great wooden flap which covered the cellars of the brewery.

UP in a dingy attic two little figures were seated on the side of a wretched straw-stuffed bed, their arms enlacing each other, their cheeks touching, their tears mingling. They had to cry in silence, for any sound might remind the ogre downstairs of their existence. Now and again one would break into an uncontrollable sob, and the other would whisper, "Hush! Hush! Oh, hush!" Then suddenly they heard the slam of the outer door and that heavy tread booming over the wooden flap. They squeezed each other in their joy. As to the woman, she was spiteful and vicious, but she did not seem so deadly as the man. In a dim way they felt that he had hunted their

mother into her grave and might do as much for them.

The room was dark save for the light which came through the single dirty window. It cast a bar across the floor, but all round was black shadow. Suddenly the little boy stiffened, clasped his sister with a tighter grip, and stared rigidly into the darkness.

"She's coming!" he muttered. "She's coming!"

Little Margery clung to him.

"Oh, Willie, is it mother?"

"It is a light—a beautiful yellow light. Can you not see it, Margery?"

But the little girl, like all the world, was without vision. To her all was darkness.

"Tell me, Willie," she whispered in a solemn voice. She was not really frightened, for many times before had the dead mother returned in the watches of the night to comfort her stricken children.

"Yes, yes, she is coming now. Oh, mother! mother!"

"What does she say, Willie?"

"Oh, she is beautiful. She is not crying. She is smiling. It is like the picture we saw of the angel. She looks so happy. Dear, dear mother! Now she is speaking. 'It is over,' she says. 'It is all over.' She says it again. Now she beckons with her hand. We are to follow. She has moved to the door."

"Oh, Willie, I dare not."

"Yes, yes, she nods her head. She bids us fear nothing. Now she has passed through the door. Come, Margery, come, or we shall lose her."

The two little mites crept across the room and Willie unlocked the door. The mother stood at the head of the stair beckoning them onwards. Step by step they followed her down into the empty kitchen. The woman seemed to have gone out. All was still in the house. The phantom still beckoned them on.

"We are to go out."

"Oh, Willie, we have no hats."

"We must follow, Madge. She is smiling and waving."

"Father will kill us for this."

"She shakes her head. She says we are to fear nothing. Come!"

They threw open the door and were in the street. Down the deserted court they followed the gleaming, gracious presence, and through a tangle of low streets and so out into the crowded rush of Tottenham Court Road. Once or twice amid all that blind torrent of humanity some man or woman, blessed with the precious gift of discernment, would start and stare as they were aware of an angel presence and of two little white-faced children who followed behind, the boy with fixed, absorbed gaze, the girl glancing ever in terror over her shoulder. Down the long street they passed, then again amid humbler dwellings, and so at last to a quiet drab line of brick houses. On the step of one the Spirit had halted.

"We are to knock," said Willie.

"Oh, Willie, what shall we say? We don't know them."

"We are to knock," he repeated, stoutly. Rat-tat! "It's all right, Madge. She is clapping her hands and laughing."

So it was that Mrs. Tom Linden, sitting lonely in her misery and brooding over her martyr in jail, was summoned suddenly to the door, and found two little apologetic figures outside it. A few words, a rush of woman's instinct, and her arms were round the children. These battered little skiffs, who had started their life's voyage so sadly, had found a harbour of peace where no storm should vex them more.

THERE were some strange happenings in Boltons Court that night. Some folk thought they had no relation to each other. One or two thought they had. The British Law saw nothing and had nothing to say.

In the second last house a keen, hawklike face peered from behind a window-blind into the darkened street. A shaded candle was behind that fearful face, dark as death, remorseless as the tomb. Behind Rebecca Levi stood a young man whose features showed that he sprang from the same Oriental race. For an hour—for a second hour—the woman had sat without a word, watching, watching. . . . At the entrance to the court there was a hanging lamp which cast a circle of yellow light. It was on this pool of radiance that her brooding eyes were fixed.

Then suddenly she saw what she had waited for. She started and hissed out a word. The young man rushed from the room and into the street. He vanished through a side door into the brewery.

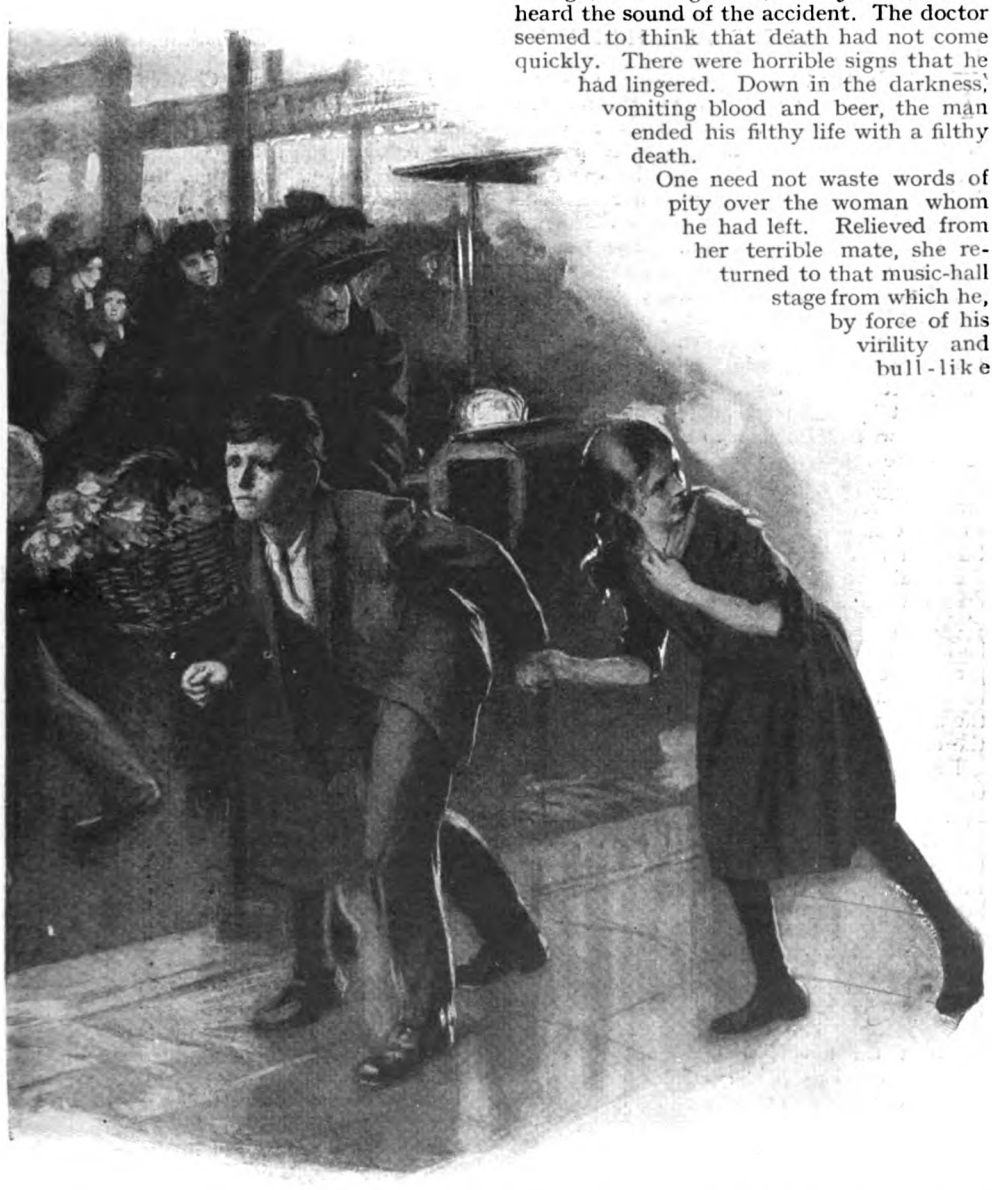
Drunken Silas Linden was coming home. He was in a gloomy, sulken state of befuddlement. A sense of injury filled his mind. He had not gained the billet he sought. His injured hand had been against him. He had hung about the bar waiting for drinks and had got some, but not enough. Now he was in a dangerous mood. Woe to the man, woman, or child who crossed his path! He thought savagely of the Jewess who lived in that darkened house. He thought savagely of all his neighbours. They would stand between him and his children, would they? He would show them. The very next morning he would take them both out into the street and strap them within an inch of their lives.

That would show them all what Silas Linden thought of their opinion. Why should he not do it now? If he were to waken the neighbours up with the shrieks of his children, it would show them once for all that they could not defy him with impunity. The idea pleased him. He stepped more briskly out. He was almost at his door when——

It was never quite clear how it was that

the cellar-flap was not securely fastened that night. The jury were inclined to blame the brewery, but the coroner pointed out that Linden was a heavy man, that he might have fallen on it if he were drunk, and that all reasonable care had been taken. It was an eighteen-foot fall upon jagged stones, and his back was broken. They did not find him till next morning, for, curiously enough, his neighbour, the Jewess, never heard the sound of the accident. The doctor seemed to think that death had not come quickly. There were horrible signs that he had lingered. Down in the darkness, vomiting blood and beer, the man ended his filthy life with a filthy death.

One need not waste words of pity over the woman whom he had left. Relieved from her terrible mate, she returned to that music-hall stage from which he, by force of his virility and bull-like



They followed the gleaming, gracious presence, the boy with fixed, absorbed gaze, the girl glancing ever in terror over her shoulder.

strength, had lured her. She tried to regain her place with :—

Hi ! Hi ! Hi ! I'm the *dernier cri*,
The girl with the cart-wheel hat,

the ditty which had won her her name. But it became too painfully evident that

she was anything but the *dernier cri*, and that she could never get back. Slowly she sank from big halls to small halls, from small halls to pubs, and so ever deeper and deeper, sucked into the awful, silent quicksands of life which drew her down and down until that vacuous painted face and frowzy head were seen no more.

XII.

THERE ARE HEIGHTS AND THERE ARE DEPTHS.

THE Institut Métapsychique was an imposing stone building in the Avenue Wagram with a door like a baronial castle. Here it was that the three friends presented themselves late in the evening. A footman showed them into a reception-room, where they were presently welcomed by Dr. Maupuis in person. The famous authority on psychic science was a short, broad man with a large head, a clean-shaven face, and an expression in which worldly wisdom and kindly altruism were blended. His conversation was in French with Mailey and Roxton, who both spoke the language well, but he had to fall back upon broken English with Malone, who could only utter still more broken French in reply. He expressed his pleasure at their visit as only a graceful Frenchman can, said a few words as to the wonderful qualities of Panbek, the Galician medium, and finally led the way downstairs to the room in which the experiments were to be conducted. His air of vivid intelligence and penetrating sagacity had already shown the strangers how preposterous were those theories which tried to explain away his wonderful results by the supposition that he was a man who was the easy victim of impostors.

Descending a winding stair they found themselves in a large chamber which looked at first glance like a chemical laboratory, for shelves full of bottles, retorts, test-tubes, scales, and other apparatus lined the walls. It was more elegantly furnished, however, than a mere workshop, and a large massive oak table occupied the centre of the room, with a fringe of comfortable chairs. At one end of the room was a large portrait of Professor Crookes, which was flanked by a second of Lombroso, while between them was a remarkable picture of one of Eusapia Palladino's séances. Round the table there was gathered a group of men who were talking in low tones, too much absorbed in their own conversation to take much notice of the new-comers.

"Three of these are distinguished visitors like yourselves," said Dr. Maupuis. "Two others are my laboratory assistants, Dr. Sauvage and Dr. Buisson. The others are Parisians of note. The press is represented to-day by Mr. Forte, sub-editor of the *Matin*. The tall, dark man who looks like a retired General you probably know. Not? That is Professor Charles Richet, our honoured *doyen*, who has shown great courage in this matter, though he has not quite reached the same conclusions as you, Monsieur Mailey. But that also may come. The distinguished-looking man with the high forehead is the Count de Grammont. The gentleman with the head of a Jupiter and the white beard is Flammarion, the astronomer. Now, gentlemen," he added, in a louder voice, "if you will take your places we shall get to work."

They sat at random round the long table, the three Britons keeping together. At one end a large photographic camera was reared aloft. Two zinc buckets also occupied a prominent position upon a side-table. The door was locked and the key given to Professor Richet. Dr. Maupuis sat at one end of the table with a small, middle-aged man, moustached, bald-headed, and intelligent, upon his right.

"Some of you have not met Monsieur Panbek," said the Doctor. "Permit me to present him to you. Monsieur Panbek, gentlemen, has placed his remarkable powers at our disposal for scientific investigation, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude. We are sitting in the hopes that some remarkable materializations which we have recently had may be renewed in such a form that we may get a permanent record of them. These materializations have taken very unexpected forms of late, and I would beg the company to repress any feelings of fear, however strange these forms may be, as a calm and judicial atmosphere is most necessary. We shall now turn out the white light and begin with the lowest degree of red light until the conditions will admit of further illumination."

The lamps were controlled from Dr. Maupuis' seat at the table. For a moment they were plunged in utter darkness. Then a dull red glow came in the corner, enough to show the dim outlines of the men round the table. There was no music and no religious atmosphere of any sort. The company conversed in whispers.

"This is different to your English procedure," said Malone.

"Very," Mailey answered. "It seems to me that we are wide open to anything which may come. It's all wrong. They don't realize the danger."

"What danger can there be?"

"Well, from my point of view it is like sitting at the edge of a pond which may have harmless frogs in it, or may have man-eating crocodiles. You can't tell what may come."

Professor Richet, who speaks excellent English, overheard the words.

"I know your views, Mr. Mailey," said he. "Don't think that I treat them lightly. Some things which I have seen make me appreciate your comparison of the frog and the crocodile. In this very room I have been conscious of the presence of creatures which could, if moved to anger, make our experiments seem rather hazardous. I believe with you that evil people here might bring an evil reflection into our circle."

"I am glad, sir, that you are moving in our direction," said Mailey, for, like everyone else, he regarded Richet as one of the world's great men.

"Moving, perhaps, and yet I cannot claim to be altogether with you yet. The latent powers of the human incarnate spirit may be so wonderful that they may extend to regions which seem at present to be quite beyond their scope. As an old materialist, I fight every inch of the ground, though I admit that I have lost several lines of trenches. My illustrious friend Challenger still holds his front intact, as I understand."

"Yes, sir," said Malone, "and yet I have some hopes——"

"Hush!" cried Maupuis in an eager voice.

THERE was dead silence. Then there came a sound of uneasy movement with a strange flapping vibration.

"The bird!" said an awestruck whisper.

There was silence, and then once again came the sound of movement and an impatient flap.

"Have you all ready, René?" asked the Doctor.

"All is ready."

"Then shoot!"

The flash of the luminant mixture filled the room, while the shutter of the camera fell. In that sudden glare of light the visitors had a momentary glimpse of a marvellous sight. The medium lay with his head upon his hands in apparent insensibility. Upon his rounded shoulders there was perched a huge bird of prey—a large falcon or an eagle. For one instant the strange picture was stamped upon their retinas even as it was upon the photographic plate. Then the darkness closed down again, save for the two red discs, like the eyes of some baleful demon lurking in the corner.

"My word!" gasped Malone. "Did you see it?"

"A crocodile out of the pond," said Mailey.

"But harmless," added Professor Richet. "The bird has been with us several times. He moves his wings, as you have heard, but otherwise is inert. We may have another and a more dangerous visitor."

The flash of the light had, of course, dispelled all ectoplasm. It was necessary to begin again. The company may have sat for a quarter of an hour when Richet touched Mailey's arm.

"Do you smell anything, Monsieur Mailey?"

Mailey sniffed the air.

"Yes, surely, it reminds me of our London Zoo."

"There is another more ordinary analogy. Have you been in a warm room with a wet dog?"

"Exactly," said Mailey. "That is a perfect description. But where is the dog?"

"It is not a dog. Wait a little! Wait!"

The animal smell became more pronounced. It was overpowering. Then suddenly Malone became conscious of something moving round the table. In the dim red light he was aware of a misshapen figure, crouching, ill-formed, with some resemblance to man. He silhouetted it against the dull radiance. It was bulky, broad, with a bullet-head, a short neck, heavy, clumsy shoulders. It slouched slowly round the circle. Then it stopped, and a cry of surprise not unmixed with fear came from one of the sitters.

"Do not be alarmed," said Dr. Maupuis' quiet voice. "It is the pithecanthropus. He is harmless." Had it been a cat which had strayed into the room the scientist could not have discussed it more calmly.

"It has long claws. It laid them on my neck," cried a voice.

"Yes, yes. He means it as a caress."

"You may have my share of his caresses," cried the sitter in a quavering voice.

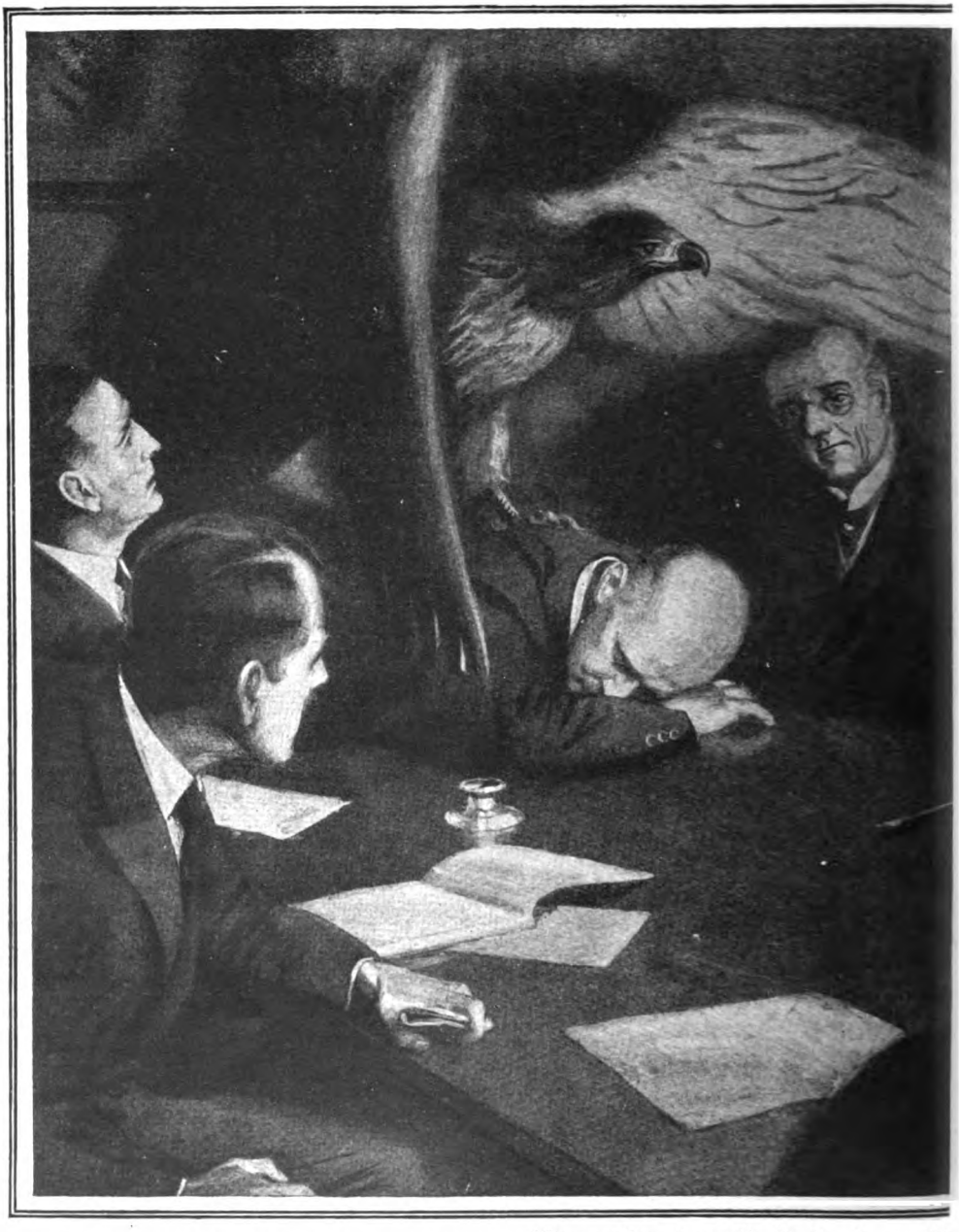
"Do not repulse him. It might be serious. He is well disposed. But he has his feelings, no doubt, like the rest of us."

The creature had resumed its stealthy progress. Now it turned the end of the table and stood behind the three friends. Its breath came in quick puffs at the back of their necks. Suddenly Lord John Roxton gave a loud exclamation of disgust.

"Quiet! Quiet!" said Maupuis.

"It's licking my hand!" cried Roxton.

An instant later Malone was aware of a shaggy head extended between Lord John and himself. With his left hand he could feel long coarse hair. It turned towards



The medium lay with his head upon his rounded shoulders there was

him, and it needed all his self-control to hold his hand still when a long soft tongue caressed it. Then it was gone.

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" he asked.

"We have been asked not to photograph it. Possibly the light would infuriate it. The command through the medium was definite. We can only say that it is either an ape-like man or a man-like ape. We have seen it more clearly than to-night. The face is simian, but the brow is straight; the arms long, the hands huge, the body covered with hair."

"Tom Linden gave us something better than that," whispered Mailey. He spoke low, but Richet caught the words.

hands in apparent insensibility. Upon his perched a huge bird of prey.

" All Nature is the field of our study, Mr. Mailey. It is not for us to choose. Shall we classify the flowers but neglect the fungi ? "

" But you admit it is dangerous."

" The X-rays were dangerous. How many martyrs lost their arms, joint by joint, before those dangers were realized ? And yet it was necessary. So it is with us. We do not know yet what it is that we are doing. But if we can indeed show the world that this pithecanthropus can come to us from the Invisible, and depart again as it came, then the knowledge is so tremendous that, even if he tore us to pieces with those formidable claws, it would none the less be our duty to go forward with our experiments."

" Science can be heroic," said Mailey. " Who can deny it ? And yet I have heard these very scientific men tell us that we imperil our reason when we try to get in touch with spiritual forces. Gladly would we sacrifice our reason, or our lives, if we could help mankind. Should we not do as much for spiritual advance as they for material ? "

THE lights had been turned up, and there was a pause for relaxation before the great experiment of the evening was attempted. The men broke into little groups, chatting in hushed tones over their recent experience. Looking round at the comfortable room with its up-to-date appliances, the strange bird and the stealthy monster seemed like dreams. And yet they had been very real, as was shown presently by the photographer, who had been allowed to leave and now rushed excitedly from the adjacent dark-room, waving the plate which he had just developed and fixed. He held it up against the light, and there, sure enough, was the bald head of the medium sunk between his hands, and crouching closely over his shoulders the outline of that ominous figure. Dr. Maupuis rubbed his little fat hands with glee. Like all pioneers, he had endured much persecution from the Parisian press, and every fresh phenomenon was another weapon for his own defence.

" *Nous marchons ! Hein ! Nous marchons !* " he kept on repeating, while Richet, lost in thought, answered, mechanically :—

" *Oui, mon ami, vous marchez !* "

THE little Galician was sitting nibbling a biscuit, with a glass of red wine before him. Malone went round to him and found that he had been in America and could talk a little English.

" Are you tired ? Does it exhaust you ? "

" In moderation, no. Two sittings a week. Behold my allowance. The Doctor will allow no more."

" Do you remember anything ? "

"It comes to me like dreams. A little here—a little there."

"Has the power always been with you?"

"Yes, yes, ever since a child. And my father, and my uncle. Their talk was of visions. For me, I would go and sit in the woods and strange animals would come round me. It did me such a surprise when I found that the other children could not see them."

"*Est-ce que vous êtes prêtes?*" asked Dr. Maupuis.

"*Parfaitement,*" answered the medium, brushing away the crumbs. The Doctor lit a spirit-lamp under one of the zinc buckets.

"We are about to co-operate in an experiment, gentlemen, which should once and for all convince the world as to the existence of these ectoplasmic forms. Their nature may be disputed, but their objectivity will be beyond doubt from now onwards unless my plans miscarry. I would first explain these two buckets to you. This one, which I am warming, contains paraffin, which is now in process of liquefaction. This other contains water. Those who have not been present before must understand that Panbek's phenomena occur usually in the same order, and that at this stage of the evening we may expect the apparition of the old man. To-night we lie in wait for the old man, and we shall, I hope, immortalize him in the history of psychic research. I resume my seat, and I switch on the red light, Number Three, which allows of greater visibility."

THE circle was now quite visible. The medium's head had fallen forward, and his deep snoring showed that he was already in trance. Every face was turned towards him, for the wonderful process of materialization was going on before their very eyes. At first it was a swirl of light, steam-like vapour which circled round his head. Then there was a waving, as of white diaphanous drapery, behind him. It thickened. It coalesced. It hardened in outline and took definite shape. There was a head. There were shoulders. Arms grew out from them. Yes, there could not be a doubt of it—there was a man, an old man, standing behind the chair. He moved his head slowly from side to side. He seemed to be peering in indecision towards the company. One could imagine that he was asking himself, "Where am I, and what am I here for?"

"He does not speak, but he hears and has intelligence," said Dr. Maupuis, glancing over his shoulder at the apparition. "We are here, sir, in the hope that you will aid us in a very important experiment. May we count upon your co-operation?"

The figure bowed its head in assent.

"We thank you. When you have attained your full power you will no doubt move away from the medium."

The figure again bowed, but remained motionless. It seemed to Malone that it was growing denser every moment. He caught glimpses of the face. It was certainly an old man, heavy-faced, long-nosed, with a curiously projecting lower lip. Suddenly, with a brusque movement, it stood clear from Panbek and stepped out into the room.

"Now, sir," said Maupuis, in his precise fashion. "You will perceive the zinc bucket upon the left. I would beg you to have the kindness to approach it and to plunge your right hand into it."

The figure moved across. He seemed interested in the buckets, for he examined them with some attention. Then he dipped one of his hands into that which the Doctor had indicated.

"Excellent!" cried Maupuis, his voice shrill with excitement. "Now, sir, might I ask you to have the kindness to dip the same hand into the cold water of the other bucket?"

The form did so.

"Now, sir, you would bring our experiment to complete success if you would lay your hand upon the table, and while it is resting there you would yourself dematerialize and return into the medium."

The figure bowed its comprehension and assent. Then it slowly advanced towards the table, stooped over it, extended its hand—and vanished. The heavy breathing of the medium ceased, and he moved uneasily as if about to wake. Maupuis turned on the white light, and threw up his hands with a loud cry of wonder and joy which was echoed by the company.

On the shining wooden surface of the table there lay a delicate yellow-pink glove of paraffin, broad at the knuckles, thin at the wrist, two of the fingers bent down to the palm. Maupuis was beside himself with delight. He broke off a small bit of wax from the wrist and handed it to an assistant, who hurried from the room.

"It is final!" he cried. "What can they say now? Gentlemen, I appeal to you. You have seen what occurred. Can any of you give any rational explanation of that paraffin mould save that it was the result of dematerialization of the hand within it?"

"I can see no other solution," Richet answered. "But you have to do with very obstinate and very prejudiced people. If they cannot deny it, they will probably ignore it."

"The press is here, and the press represents the public," said Maupuis. "For the press Engleesh, Monsieur Malone," he went

The figure slowly advanced towards tne table, stooped over it, extended its hand —and vanished.

on in his broken way. "Is it that you can see any answer?"

"I can see none," Malone answered.

"And you, monsieur?" addressing the representative of the *Matin*.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"For us who had the privilege of being present it was indeed convincing," said he, "and yet you will certainly be met with objections. They will not realize how fragile this thing is. They will say that the medium brought it on his person and laid it upon the table."

Maupuis clapped his hands triumphantly. His assistant had just brought him a slip of paper from the next room.

"Your objection is already answered," he cried, waving the paper in the air. "I had foreseen it and I had put some cholesterine among the paraffin in the zinc pail. You may have observed that I broke off a corner of the mould. It was for the purpose of chemical analysis. This has now been done. It is here and cholesterine has been detected."

"Excellent!" said the French journalist. "You have closed the last hole. But what next?"

"What we have done once we can do again," Maupuis answered. "I will prepare a number of these moulds. In some cases I will have fists and hands. Then I will have plaster casts made from them. I will run the plaster inside the mould. It is delicate, but it can be done. The glove, of course, will be sacrificed in the process. I will have dozens of them made and I will send them broadcast to every capital in the

world, that people may see with their own eyes. Will that not at last convince them of the reality of our studies ? "

" Do not hope for too much, my poor friend," said Richet, with his hand upon the shoulder of the enthusiast. " You have not yet realized the enormous *vis inertiæ* of the world. But as you have said, ' *Vous marchez—vous marchez toujours.*' "

" And our march is regulated," said Mailey. " There is a gradual release to accommodate it to the receptivity of mankind."

Richet smiled and shook his head.

" Always transcendental, Monsieur Mailey ! Always seeing more than meets the eye and changing science into philosophy ! I fear you are incorrigible. Is your position reasonable ? "

" Professor Richet," said Mailey, very earnestly, " I would beg you to answer the same question. I have a deep respect for your talents and complete sympathy with your caution, but have you not come to the dividing of the ways ? You are now in the position that you admit—you must admit—that our intelligent apparition in human form, built up from the substance which you have yourself named ectoplasm, can walk the room and carry out instructions while the medium lay senseless under our eyes, and yet you hesitate to assert that Spirit has an independent existence. Is *that* reasonable ? "

Richet smiled and shook his head. Without answering, he turned to bid farewell to Dr. Maupuis, and to offer him his congratulations. A few minutes later the company had broken up and our friends were in a taxi speeding towards their hotel.

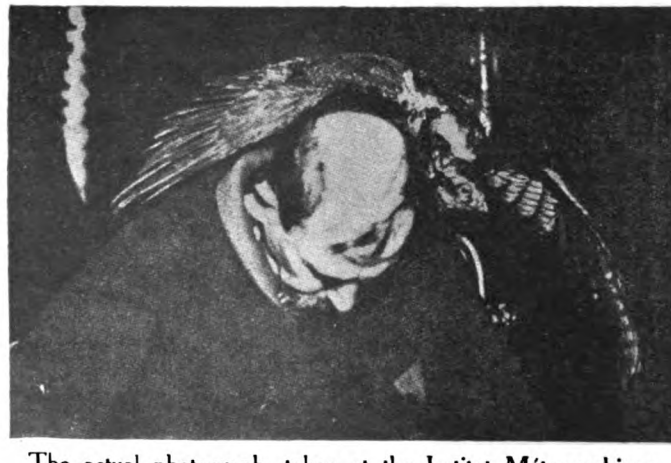
Malone was deeply impressed with what he had seen, and he sat up half the night drawing up a full account of it for the Central News, with the names of those who had endorsed the results—honourable names which no one in the world could associate with folly or deception.

" Surely, surely, this will be a turning point and an epoch." So ran his dream. Two days later he opened the great London dailies one after the other. Columns about football. Columns about golf. A full page as to the value of shares. A long and earnest correspondence in *The Times* about the habits of the lapwing. Not one word in any of them as to the wonders which he had seen and reported. Mailey laughed at his dejected face.

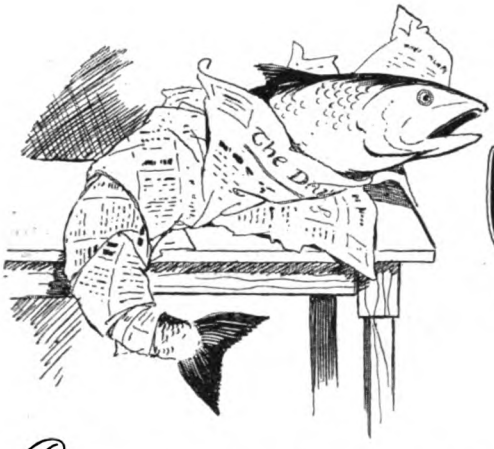
" A mad world, my masters," said he. " A crazy world ! But the end is not yet ! "

(*To be continued.*)

Specimens of these moulds may be inspected at the Psychic College, 59, Holland Park, London, W., or at the Psychic Museum, Abbey House, Victoria Street, London, S.W.



The actual photograph, taken at the Institut Métapsychique, of the bird of prey perched upon the medium.



The Un-Birthday Present

By B. MACDONALD HASTINGS

ILLUSTRATED BY RIDGEWELL

"CAN'T be a birthday present, sir, because it isn't your birthday."

"Perhaps it's an un-birthday present, Barlick."

A large salmon had arrived at the Mount Street flat of the Honourable Alec McClechnie. It had put in an appearance at a little after eleven a.m., when the Honourable Alec was still in bed.

Barlick stood in his master's bedroom, obviously relishing his news and yet puzzled to account for it. Who could have sent so large a fish to so small a household? Mrs. McClechnie was in Scotland with her maid, and there were only the master and Barlick himself to eat the monster. And was not the master himself going away that very Friday afternoon for the week-end?

"Perhaps it is an un-birthday present, Barlick."

"I don't follow you, sir."

Barlick always talked like that and his master liked him for it. He also admired his efficiency and ready wit in an emergency.

"If you knew your 'Alice,' Barlick, you would know that an un-birthday present is a present that you get on a day which is not your birthday. You can get un-birthday presents on three hundred and sixty-four days and birthday presents only on one day."

"I follow you, sir."

"You say there is no note, no enclosure of any kind."

"None at all, sir."

"My wife is in the salmon country, but she would not allow her host to send it, as she knows we couldn't eat it. She knows, too, that I am going to the De Catterans for the week-end."

"The fish did not come by train, sir."

"Oh, you know that?"

"It's from Gill and Giggleswick, the Bond Street fishmongers."

"Why didn't you say so at first?"

"It doesn't explain who sent it, sir, and I thought perhaps you'd like to take in the details slowly."

The Honourable Alec grinned. Barlick knew him so well. He was indeed enjoying the visitation of the mysterious salmon and did not want to solve the problem at once. But Barlick was as much his nurse as his valet. Nice, big, smooth-faced Barlick, who only wanted a monocle to make him look like one of those politicians or banker fellows one met in the club.

"Obviously a mistake, Barlick, by Messrs. Gill and Giggleswick."

"Unlikely, sir. We don't deal there."

"Oh!"

"No, sir; the mistress goes to the Army and Navy or the Haymarket and sometimes the O'Fisheries. Gill and Giggleswick wouldn't have our address unless someone gave it to them."

"Sound fellow."

"There's another point. The fish is addressed to the Honourable Alec. That means a friend has sent it, sir. Others would have put the Honourable Alexander."

"Maybe, bright Barlick. At any rate, we can always ask Mr. Gill or Mr. Giggleswick. When I go in the shop, I shall say to the first man I see, 'Are you Mr. Gill?'

And I bet you five pounds he'll say, ' No, I'm Mr. Giggleswick.' "

" That's life, sir."

While he shaved, young Alec McClechnie wondered what he would do with the fish. It would be absurd to go away and leave it to rot in the flat. Barlick and the cat could not get through sixteen pounds, and Cecily would not be back till Monday. Moreover, one did not have a salmon to give away every day, and it might make an impression on someone worth impressing. Who should have it ? Must consult Barlick.

Barlick sat at the typewriter while his master ate breakfast, for he was an admirable secretary as well as a valet.

" I suppose I couldn't take the fish away with me for the week-end ? The De Catterans might be glad to have it if they have a big party."

" They have no salmon rivers near them, have they, sir ? "

" Good gracious, no. They have nothing near them. They live miles off the earth, in fact. Still, if I give them the fish, they might be inclined to resent it. When a man's asked to dinner, he doesn't bring his food with him."

" In the present state of taxation, sir, no one is rich enough to refuse anything."

" Oh, they wouldn't refuse it. But old De Catteran might pull my leg about it. The story would go round, and whenever I went on a visit I'd be greeted with ' Have you brought the fish ? ' Not worth risking. No, Barlick, we'll give the fish to Mr. Tendering."

" Of Upper Grosvenor Street ? "

" That's right. Now type this. ' Dear Juggles,—While shrimping this morning in the Serpentine . . .' No, that won't do. He can't bear facetiousness. ' Dear Juggles,—My wife is having tremendous sport in Scotland, sometimes hooking three salmon (or salmons) at one go.' "

" Mr. Tendering knows, sir, that your wife does not fish. I overheard them speak of it."

" Then what shall I say ? "

" May I compose it for you, sir ? "

" Go ahead."

Barlick typed off a note and then read it aloud : " My dear Tendering,—A fine salmon has been sent me by a friend. My wife is in Scotland, and to-day I also go away for a brief holiday. Would you care to accept the fish from me ? Yours sincerely."

" I'll sign it, Barlick, but he'll know I never wrote it."

Tendering was an elderly retired lawyer with a large family, and Alec knew that the fish would be very welcome. Still, he wished that he had not been compelled to admit that he was merely passing on an unwanted present.

Barlick took the box containing the salmon off to Upper Grosvenor Street, and returned to say that it had been accepted at the servants' entrance. He received no message to bring back.

" Right-o, Barlick. My train doesn't go till one-fifty and I'll find time to call in on Gill and Giggleswick. Must thank generous donor, you know, Barlick, though he seems a bit of an ass to send a sixteen-pound salmon to two young and childless people."

" Shall I meet you at the station with your bag, sir ? "

" No. Spoil your afternoon, wouldn't it ? Call me a taxi and I'll take the bag along to the club."

AN hour after Alec McClechnie had left his flat a telegram was brought to the door. Barlick had instructions to read any such message from his master. When he had taken in the drift of the telegram, he sent the messenger away. Barlick was always a pale man, but the reading of this communication had turned him into a whitewashed sepulchre.

He read the words aloud to himself :—

" Have ordered salmon to be sent to your flat deeply grateful bring fish down with you De Catteran."

So that was the explanation of the fish. The monster belonged to Mr. De Catteran, and Barlick's master was entrusted with the job of escorting it down into the country. Mr. De Catteran evidently expected Mr. McClechnie to motor down, not knowing that Mrs. McClechnie had taken the car to Scotland. Naturally he had surmised that his guest would have no objection to obliging him in the matter of the conveyance of fresh fish for dinner. It was something that Mr. McClechnie would have been delighted to do And now the wretched salmon had been given away.

Immediate action was necessary. Mr. McClechnie must be informed and another fish must be bought. It was now ten minutes to one, and Mr. McClechnie's train. the only train of the day, by the way, to the home town of the De Catterans, was timed to leave in an hour.

Barlick sprang to the telephone.

" Is that the Colophon Club ? Mr. McClechnie there ? "

" Been gone five minutes."

Barlick groaned and turned up another number in the book.

" Is that the Cappadocia ? Mr. McClechnie there ? "

" Not seen him this morning."

The faithful Barlick rang up more clubs. restaurants, even shops, including Messrs.

Gill and Giggleswick. But his master was not to be found. The only sure place of meeting was, of course, the railway station whence the one-fifty started. But what was the good of giving his master the news without a fish?

The original salmon could not be recovered from Mr. Tendering. So Barlick counted the notes in his case and set off for one of the shops where his mistress traded. Here he met with a rebuff, there being no whole salmon in stock, and Barlick knew that his master could not take down pieces. Valuable time was passing and Barlick jumped into a cab.

At his next shop of call there was no salmon whatever, and at his third only a monster of about forty pounds, which it would be preposterous to acquire. Almost in despair he determined to try Gill and Giggleswick.

Luck at last! The Bond Street fishmongers had a fine fish of about the weight. Barlick could scarcely wait for the packing and eagerly handed over the four pounds which was pronounced to be the minimum price.

"It's one of a pair that came in this morning," observed Mr. Gill (or Mr. Giggleswick). "We had the honour of sending the other to the Honourable Mr. McClechnie."

"Don't I know it?" groaned Barlick, and dashed for his cab.

The taxi-driver did his best and got Barlick into the station just in time.

But the ticket-collector would not let Barlick through without a ticket.

"Parcel for a passenger," yelled Barlick. "Don't stop me! Parcel for a passenger. Very perishable."

"Must have a platform ticket."

"No time. Here's a shilling. Let me through."

The official hesitated, and Barlick, seeing the train move, broke past him. There was no time to find Mr. McClechnie, now doubtless buried under newspapers in a first-class carriage. Barlick snatched open the door of the last third-class compartment and leapt aboard.

The ticket-collector wiped his forehead, and for some time spoke in whispers.

"Don't stop me!" yelled Barlick. "Parcel for a passenger. Very perishable."

"I give that blighter best," he murmured. "A four-hour non-stop journey for a shilling!" And he proceeded to the manager's office to make his report.

ALEC had visited his usual haunts after leaving his flat. It was just bad luck that Barlick had not been able to find him. He had in fact left the shop of Gill and Giggleswick only a quarter of an hour before Barlick arrived there.

"Are you Mr. Gill?" Alec had inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh! Then I've lost five pounds. Never mind. You are Mr. Gill of Gill and Giggleswick. You sent me a salmon this morning. My name is McClechnie."

"Quite right, sir. We had the honour of sending a fine fish to the Honourable Alec McClechnie this morning."

"I never ordered it."

"Certainly not, sir. It was ordered by an old patron of ours, Mr. De Catteran."

"Cripes! I beg your pardon. Say that again. Who ordered it?"

"Mr. De Catteran. Here is the telegram. 'Please send salmon about fifteen pounds to Honourable Alec McClechnie, 187 g, Mount Street.'"

"What an odd thing! However, it's not for you to worry over, is it? H'm! Beastly puzzle, though. Good morning, Mr. Gigglewick."

"Gill, sir."

"Don't rub it in."

Alec jumped into his cab and told the driver to go to Mount Street.

He knew that the salmon could not have been meant for him to eat. De Catteran would not be so foolish as to send a perishable gift like that to a man who was coming to stay with him. Obviously something was to be done with the salmon by Alec, and De Catteran might by now have wired his request to the flat.

Then Alec found the telegram. He suffered similarly to Barlick for a moment, but presently he grinned.

"Tendering's in luck. I can't send Barlick to get the fish back. By the way, where is Barlick?"

At that moment Barlick was trying to buy a salmon at a neighbouring stores.

"If Barlick were in, I could send him to buy another salmon. As he is not, I must buy one myself or go down without."

Barlick's master had better luck at salmon-buying than his servant. At the first shop he visited he secured a fine twenty-pounder for a trifle under five pounds. He hustled the shopmen so as to get it on to his cab in good time to catch the one-fifty.

But time is no longer what it was in the London streets. A man in a car can be very, very near and very, very far. Alec's taxi ran into a traffic block.

"You sent me a salmon this morning. My name is McClechnie."

He missed the one-fifty p.m. easily. There was no other train of the slightest use till the one-fifty p.m. on the morrow, Saturday. Alec took his fish back to Mount Street.

ALEC McCLECHNIE always said afterwards that the reason why he did not hire a car and motor the two-hundred-odd miles was that he was really anxious about Barlick. Things that Barlick ought to have done before leaving were left undone, and this was so very unusual that it put out of Alec's head the thought of wiring to the De Catterans. He could not have telephoned as their absurd place was too far from civilization to have wires extended to it.

It was a hot afternoon. Alec knew that heat did not agree with fish and he was anxious to keep his purchase fresh till the following day, when he proposed to make another attempt to visit the De Catterans.

He had no ice. Now, if Barlick had been there, he could have sent him for ice. What was the next best thing? Cold water, of course. He would put his twenty-pounder in cold water, and then, when Barlick returned, and he might be back at any moment, he would send him for ice.

Alec took his big salmon to the bathroom, laid it on the gleaming floor of the bath, and turned on the cold tap.

"Hanged if the beast isn't floating," observed Alec, after the tap had run for a bit. "How disgusting! A dead salmon shouldn't be so beastly flighty. I have an idea that if I get him down to De Catteran's I shall never be able to eat him."

Alec sat and waited long for Barlick. Then he became bored, gave Barlick up, and went to a theatre, a supper-party, and a cabaret.

When he returned home at four on Saturday morning, there was still no sign of Barlick.

Such an incident was unprecedented in Barlick's career. True, he was free to do as he liked in his master's absence, but he had failed to do his work before he left the flat. Moreover, it was clear that he had read the De Catterans' telegram and apparently had treated the matter quite callously.

"He laughed," reflected Alec. "He just laughed. He made no attempt to get in touch with me, but just put on his hat and went off on a pub-crawl. He thinks he can come in an hour before I'm expected back and put things right. We shall see. By the Lord Henry, this Barlick shall be Barlicked."

Alec left his flat on Saturday morning to get a stock of his favourite cigarettes. He met a friend, who kept him for half an hour, and then went back to his flat to get his bag and pack the salmon. He was in a bad temper because he had missed his morning bath. The very thought of entering the bathroom with that huge fish floating there repelled him.

He went to the bathroom for the fish. It was gone!

First he put his cigarettes into his kit-bag, then he assembled the wrappers in which the salmon had been hidden on the preceding day, and went to the bathroom for the fish.

It was gone!

Alec spent a little while drawing deep breaths. He left the bathroom, picked up a newspaper, read a paragraph or two, and then went back to the bathroom. The fish was still missing.

What could have happened to it? Barlick! Yes, that was it. Barlick must have come home late the night before, found the salmon, and put it in what he thought was a more suitable place. But where had Barlick gone then? And where was the salmon now?

The clock in the lobby showed that it was nearly twelve noon. There was not much time to get another fish if Alec was to catch that one-fifty. Hastily Alec searched the flat, and a mighty mess he made in the process. All in vain! The fish had obviously been carried off!

"If Barlick did not take it," thought Alec, "it must have come to life. Salmon leap, don't they? The bathroom window was open."

He peered out of the window on to a stone courtyard. There was no sign of a fish.

"Of course, if it went out that way, the cats have had it by now. This is a warning, in a way. I'll write to *The Times* and advise all people who put salmon in their baths to keep the bathroom windows shut. My loss shall be the world's gain."

He dashed out into the lobby, picked up his hat, and ran to the nearest fish-shop. Once more luck was with him, and he secured a twenty-seven pounder for not much more than seven pounds. It was now twelve-thirty, and he returned to his flat to get a snack of bread and cheese and pick up his bag.

Five minutes after his return the front door opened, and in walked Barlick, bearing a large parcel.

Alec lit a cigarette.

"Good morning, sir," observed Barlick.

"Barlick, take a month's notice."

"I expected that, sir."

"What are you carrying there?"

"Salmon, sir."

"Ah! Then it was you who stole my fish from the bathroom."

"I don't follow you, sir."

"If that is a salmon, where did you get it?"

Then Barlick told his simple story, and at the end of it his master shook his hand.

"Barlick, you are perfectly splendid. We must have another war just to exploit you on the General Staff."

"I didn't enjoy it, sir. They stopped me at the station at the other end. They'd been warned on the telephone to look out

for me travelling without a ticket. They let me pay in the end, but only because Mr. De Catteran's car was there to meet me—I mean you, sir."

"And what did Mr. De Catteran say?"

"He was most kind, sir, putting me up most comfortably for the night. He said that he knew you were a Catholic and ate only fish on a Friday. As they can't get fish in his neighbourhood, he took the liberty of ordering this salmon and asking you to bring it down."

"Did you tell him that his wire was late and that we gave away his salmon?"

"No, sir. I thought that was best left to your discretion."

"Quite right. But why have you brought it back?"

"Well, sir, Friday's over, isn't it? You can eat anything to-night. And Mr. De Catteran, he doesn't care about salmon. He said the shop would take it back."

"Maybe. But the shop won't take back my two. In fact, one of them I haven't got, so I can't take it back."

"It is very mysterious, sir. Did you say you put it in the bathroom?"

"In the bath, Barlick. And I expect it came to life in the fresh water, leapt out of the window, broke its neck in the courtyard, and has been devoured by the Mount Street grimalkins."

"I never heard of such a thing."

Barlick went into the lobby of the flat and pressed an electric bell-push. In a little while the caretaker of the flats made his appearance.

"Know anything about a salmon?"

"Should think I do."

"What right have you to take salmon out of our bath without authority?"

"Open season in Scotland. Close season in bathland," observed the Honourable Alec.

"This morning, sir, when your flat was unoccupied, owing to your having just gone out and Mr. Barlick being wherever he might have happened to be, a man calls from Gill and Giggleswick, the fishmongers. He shows me a telegram cancelling the order of a salmon to be supplied here. I have had your authority to act for you and Mrs. McClechnie according to my discretion, when all else is absent. I let myself into the flat, roamed around for the fish, rescued it from the water, which had made it swell, dried it on the bath-towels, packed it, and handed it over to the person purporting to be its rightful owner. Which if I done wrong, I'm sorry, but you got no cause to worry."

"You see, Barlick, what has happened is that Mr. De Catteran has wired cancelling the order of the salmon, but that doesn't help us with our little lot."

"Excuse me," interrupted the caretaker. "If I done wrong and should not have let the man have the fish you was keeping in the bath, perhaps it'll put your mind at ease if I tell you there's a parcel just come which looks to me very like as if it's another salmon."

"Aren't they plentiful this year?" remarked the Honourable Alec, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"Another salmon!" gasped Barlick. "Where the dickens does that come from?"

"Tendering I think the name was. Yes, Tendering, Upper Grosvenor Street. The man that brought it says Mr. and Mrs. Tendering is in Switzerland with their family, and he thought it best brought back before it smells."

The Honourable Alec burst into uproarious laughter, and presently, stripping the wrappers from the mighty fishes, he danced with them all over the flat.

"You'll miss your train again, sir," warned Barlick.

"Lot I care. I'm going to stay at home this week-end and give a salmon party."

The party was given at a certain East-end hospital, and the patients thought it was almost worth while being ill to get a Sunday lunch like that.

CECILY McCLECHNIE came back from Scotland on the Monday, all rosy from her Highland holiday. She had actually been allowed to throw a fly, she said, and with beginner's luck had hooked a salmon. Her host had insisted on her bringing the fish back with her, big as it was. Of course, they could cut a joint off for themselves and perhaps send the rest over to those charming Tenderings with their large family.

NEXT MONTH:

A New Story of "Stalky & Co."

By RUDYARD KIPLING

The Art of Public Speaking

Lord Birkenhead's article on "Advocacy," published last month, is here followed by "Parliamentary Speaking," by The Rt. Hon. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., and "Speaking in the Pulpit," by Dean Inge.

II. PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKING

By

THE RT. HON. T. P. O'CONNOR, M.P.

I SHALL try in this article to set forth what I regard as the most successful methods of addressing the Houses of Parliament, and I shall illustrate my conclusions by references to some of their greatest speakers. Just as, in one sense, there is no such thing as a river—its ever-flowing waters make it always different—so there is no such thing as a House of Commons. By that I mean not only that it changes its composition after every General Election, but that even the same House of Parliament is never the same. There are differences of rules, of temper, of tendency, of oratory. The House of Commons is never the same even in the same sitting. It has permanent characteristics, of course—the reflection of special racial qualities; but it is after all a crowd, and it has in a very distinct form the crowd psychology. Of crowd psychology it has above all things that quality of quick infection—if I may use that phrase—of any crowd; the slight joke that would pass unnoticed among a few men sets the House of Commons in a roar; a harmless little gibe provokes an explosion; a burst of elevated eloquence reduces it from its usual turbulent mutability to sepulchral silence. To speak, therefore, or to think, of the House of Commons as something stable, calculable, immutable, is as reasonable as to expect in the tossing ocean the tranquillity of an inland lake under a June sky. The masters of the House of Commons are those who have realized this mutability of its temper.

The Rt. Hon. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.

They in time become the slaves of those whom they master by adapting themselves to their particular class of audience.

What, then, are these characteristics of the House of Commons which have to be realized by those who seek to gain its ear? First, one must go down to the racial characteristics of the people of which it principally consists—I mean, of course, the English people. The fundamental characteristic of the Englishman in almost all conditions of life is humour—and good-humour as well. No genuine Englishman will consent to take himself, or anything about or around him, too seriously. I am often struck by this racial characteristic when I meet in rapid succession an Englishman and an American—especially when I meet them at a public gathering; the one—he from the other side of the Atlantic—so portentously solemn; the other so light-hearted even in circumstances that may be solemn.

The first and fundamental racial characteristic implies the character of the speaking which best suits the House of Commons. Disraeli, who proved one of the masters of that Assembly, and rose on its crowd psychology to the leadership of the Empire, described the ideal tone of speech in the House of Commons as that of genteel conversation in well-bred society, and the description is, I think, accurate. The voice of the ideal Parliamentarian is set to quiet tones; the shouting orator is nearly always intolerable to the House. One of the things which have brought home this central fact of House of Commons speaking is the fate which I have often seen befall some men who came there with tremendous reputations from the platform. This is especially noticeable when a member speaks in the House immediately after he has won an election—especially a by-election. He starts confidently forth with the same kind of address—perhaps even with the same periods as have sent his excited constituents into a passion of enthusiastic approval; and within a few minutes he finds the benches around him become empty instead of full. More than once have I seen that tragic beginning—and at the same time ending—of a Parliamentarian's career.

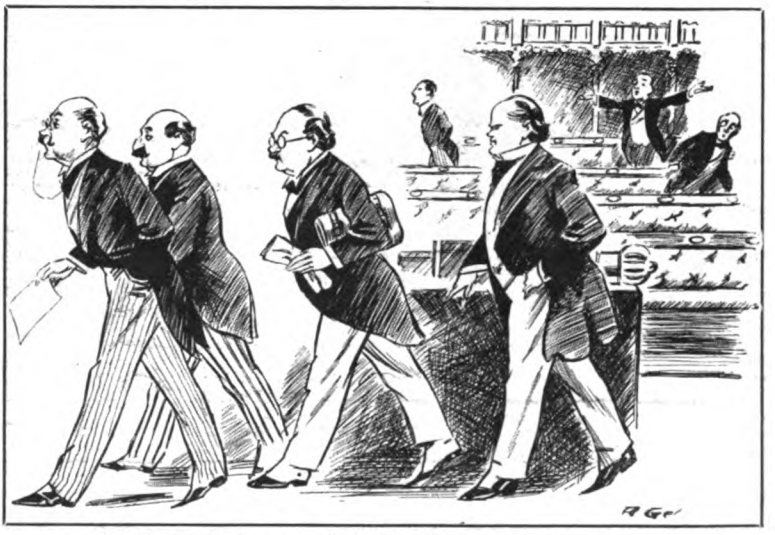
I saw that fate befall a young member who is now dead and gone, though to-day his son occupies a deservedly high position in the House of Commons. The most tragic example I remember is that of a once very famous speaker long since dead—the late Handel Cossham—or "Pumphandle" Cossham as he was popularly nicknamed; he was a very ardent teetotaller—I saw him once drink four cups of strong tea at midnight after a big speech or two. I don't know that I ever heard a more powerful and winning speaker on the platform—always excepting, of course, John Bright. He was so powerful that I almost came to the conclusion that I would never speak with him on the same platform; he reduced me to such a sense of my puniness compared with his magnitude. Yet after his first or second speech in the House of Commons, his rise was as promptly effective in emptying the House as though he were suddenly denounced as an infectious leper. The epitaph on his Parliamentary tomb might well have been—he shouted instead of talking.

I HAVE mentioned John Bright; and in trying to analyse in memory what were the qualities that made him so omnipotent—and in the House as much as on the platform—I should put as the very first of them his magnificent self-command. I remember as though it were but yesterday the first time I ever heard him; I was just turned eighteen at the time, and was a shivering and very incompetent shorthand writer, and I had practically never seen an Englishman before, certainly never heard one of any note make a speech. I got one of the surprises of my life: for all I had read in the few papers I could buy at the time had led me to think of him as a boisterous, exaggerated, vehement demagogue, who tore a passion to tatters whenever he spoke. I should parenthetically recall the fact that at that epoch in his career Bright was always portrayed in the pages of *Punch* as a prize-fighter, with a single eyeglass. And then I found myself listening to a man who seemed the very embodiment of superb self-control, who spoke in a low, gentle voice, who used scarcely any gesture, and who had a slight touch of the nasal that I associated with British Nonconformity. And yet his speech, delivered in those gentle tones, was full of explosive matter, when I came to read and reflect on it afterwards; he anticipated changes which were revolutionary at that time, and to-day are sanctified by places on the Statute-book.

I have often heard men of the generation before me try to analyse what were the qualities in the oratory of Bright which produced its tremendous effects. One great politician, and to a certain extent a contemporary of Bright—the late Sir Charles Dilke—used to declare that the oratory of Bright could be explained simply by his voice—it was, in short, to use the old Latin tag, *vox et præterea nihil*. It was a ridiculously absurd judgment; but I should add that the voice of Bright was one of the

The man with a tremendous platform reputation—

some respects of the same stuff as an actor, and what actor can ever be quite independent, in his effects on an audience, of the quality of his voice? When I look back on the marvellous, the varied, the life-long potency of the speech of Gladstone, I can think of nothing which so much accounts for it as his voice—and, I might add, to be more precise, his management of his voice. I can remember many lengthy speeches—which, in any other speaker, would have bored so impatient an Assembly as the House of Commons—running into an hour and a half and even two hours; and yet there was no impatience in the thrilled and attentive Assembly—a great part of it hostile—which lay under his spell. And what—reminiscently—do I chiefly remember of these speeches? I must answer, the voice and—I must add—the management of that voice. That marvellous organ went up and down the whole gamut of tone as skilfully, apparently also as instinctively, as a great *prima*



—often finds his first speech in the House of Commons anything but a success.

most powerful factors in the effectiveness of his oratory. It was always low—I don't remember hearing it even once lifted beyond a certain note; but it had in it a penetrating quality—with its calm, like the quiet voice of the sea at night that you know may rise to the hoarse shriek of storm; its gentleness had behind it the deep passion and the inflexible strength of the man and the temperament behind it. So potent indeed was this voice, that when I heard Mr. Bright beginning a speech with the sacramental words: "Mr. Speaker, Sir," I already began to feel thrills through my spine.

Which brings me to this conclusion, that of all the qualities, not purely intellectual, which create the man powerful in addressing the House of Commons, I should put a fine voice as the very first. I don't mean it disrespectfully—but really the orator is in

donna singing a great aria. It was low; it sank sometimes to a whisper—sometimes it rose close to thunder—but very rarely; and always stopped far short of a shout. A shout is always fatal. So that really you could no more escape from the witchery of this man than you would desire to leave a theatre in the midst of a *prima donna's* chief air.

And as I have spoken of Gladstone's management of his voice, I must express the strong conviction that no voice, however beautiful, can exercise its full influence on the House of Commons, or, indeed, on any other audience, unless it is well managed. If I had a son whom I wanted to train for Parliamentary life I would insist—as the elder Pitt did with his son (in some respects as great almost as himself)—on his being trained by a teacher of voice production. Lord Rosebery is a great orator, and has a beautiful voice; yet I saw him once destroy the whole effect of a brilliant, moving passage in a speech of his simply by the bad management of his voice. The passage was somewhat long; it was leading, and meant to lead, to a great climax in a peroration; it was built up somewhat slowly and artistically; but by the time Lord Rosebery came to its last sentences his voice had almost gone; it was a terrible anti-climax, and the audience showed this by an absolutely unbroken silence when it came to an end. If the ringing sentences had been spoken in a ringing voice, every man would have been on his feet.

Which brings me back again to what I consider one of the most necessary qualities of the effective speaker—especially in the House of Commons—the secret of Bright, who always succeeded, the secret of Gladstone, except on the few occasions when he failed—and that is calm self-control. That was the first impression you got when you saw Bright rise and heard him speak. There were moments—they were few—when Gladstone lost this most necessary quality. He was angered, or he was excited, and he had a very vulnerable temper—as he himself shamefacedly sometimes allowed, and he began his speech with a shout and with wild gestures; whenever he let himself go like that, he failed; or at least he failed till he had got back to normal, and used that voice passing from lofty appeal to a gentle coo.

Mr. Bright offers to give satisfaction to the Liberal Party.
One of the "Punch" cartoons of John Bright referred to in the article.

I hope I have set forth from these historical instances what are the main qualities of a speaker that appeal to the House of Commons. I might illustrate them by some living examples such as Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George. The language of the one is never violent; that of the other is sometimes violent. Mr. Asquith rarely speaks above the tones of polite conversation in a well-bred drawing-room; but what man has ever stated great cases better in the House of Commons, and never one that I can remember in a shout. And those acquainted with Parliamentary life, like myself, know that in the House of Commons, and, indeed, I think also on the platform, Mr. Lloyd George never shouts—though now and then he descends to deep notes, that have in them something raucous and enraged.

Finally, to anybody who comes to ask me, as an old campaigner, how should any orator try to fashion his speech, I would sum up my counsel in these sentences: Speak when you are standing as though you were seated—and to a thousand or ten thousand as though to one man seated by your side in your own study; never lose your self-control; never shout.

III. SPEAKING IN THE PULPIT

By

THE VERY REVD W. R. INGE

(DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S)

A SCHOOLBOY derived the word "sermon" from *sero moneo*, "I warn too late." Late or early, it seems an ineffective method of helping people to mend their ways. If we had to fill a number of narrow-necked vessels with water (and are we not all narrow-necked vessels?) should we set them up in rows before us and dash the contents of a bucket over them? Yet this is exactly what the preacher has to do. He may flatter himself that a drop or two gets in here and there, but more than this he can hardly expect.

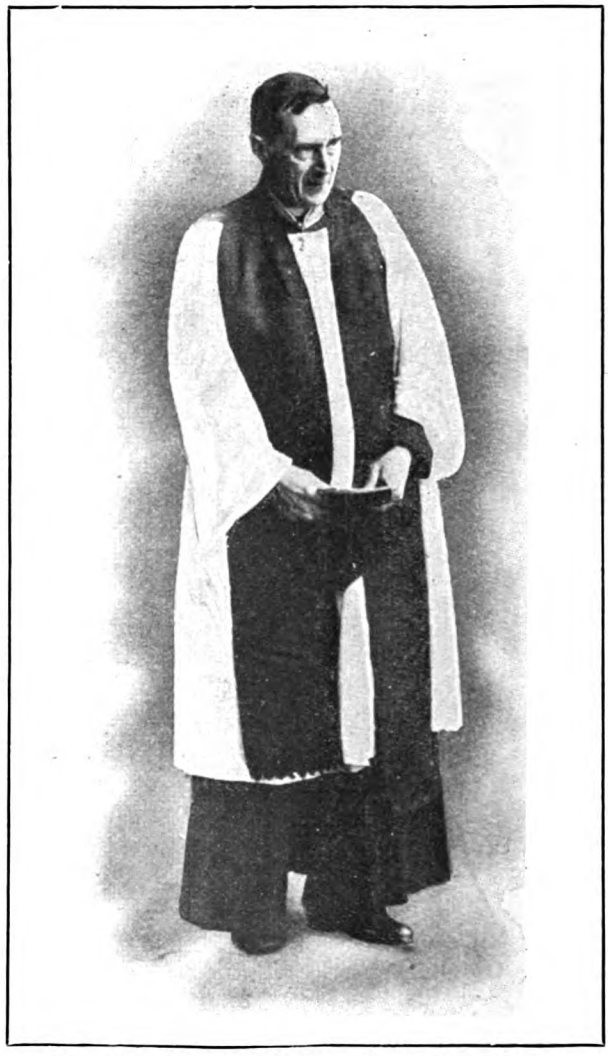
Why, it may be asked, should we listen to lectures at all, when we can all read? It is much pleasanter to lounge in an armchair with our feet on the fender, and read a book at our leisure, skipping when the man is dull, and reading him twice if he happens to be profound, than to sit on a hard bench in a stuffy church or lecture-room where we are at the mercy of an orator who may or may not edify us. The prestige of the spoken word has much diminished since the old philosophers (unluckily for us) refused to commit to writing what they considered the deepest parts of their teaching. We are now a nation of readers, and it is a psychological fact that those who are accustomed to imbibe information through the eye are more or less obtuse in assimilating a speech.

And yet it is a remarkable fact that the greatest teachers—Christ, Buddha, and Socrates—taught orally. This method of instruction has not been killed by the printed page. The form of the homily came into the Church from the Sophists, professors of rhetoric, and the great preachers of the fourth century had gone through the rhetorical schools. We must fancy Chrysostom sitting in a chair, while his congregation stood round him, clapping their hands at the carefully-prepared periods which earned him the name of "Golden Mouth." Rhetoric has been a very doubtful boon to the Church. Christ never stooped to it; and some fashionable preachers, with their congregations, are enough to make scholars laugh and angels weep.

There is one amusing story about ancient preaching. The Emperor Theodosius II. arrested Cyrus, one of the leading noblemen of Constantinople, for being a pagan, which he probably was, though this is not likely to have been the motive for arresting him. Cyrus, in great trepidation, not only declared himself a Christian, but had himself ordained priest. Theodosius immediately made him bishop of a remote town in Asia Minor. Cyrus reluctantly went into what was virtually exile, and reached his diocese just at Christmas. His flock maliciously insisted on his preaching to them on that very day, and, in the words of the chronicler, "Under compulsion he mounted the pulpit

to preach. And after invoking peace upon them, he proceeded as follows: 'My brethren, let the birthday of our God and Saviour be honoured by silence. To him be glory,' etc. Then he came down, and remained in that place till he died."

Perhaps the first thing to impress on the beginner is the advice given by one Greek poet to another: "You should sow with the hand, not with the whole sack"—in other words, take one subject, and do not wander over the whole field of theology and ethics. And the second is that a sermon is a kind of speech, not a kind of essay. It is meant to be heard, not read. The lecture-sermon, like the Bamptons at Oxford and the Hulseans at Cambridge, is a cross between two kinds of writing; the lecturer generally remembers that it will be read by more than those who hear it, and delivers his book, or part of it, from manuscript; but this is not good preaching. The most effective Parliamentary speakers, and the most effective preachers, are not good to read; Gladstone's speeches, and Liddon's sermons, now seem very tedious. There have been a few exceptions, like John Bright and Robertson of Brighton, or Phillips Brooks; but the rule generally holds. There are many good published sermons; but these were generally written with a view to publication.



The Very Rev. W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's.

The great denominations have their own favourite styles. Anglicans prefer a much quieter tone and manner than that which pleases Methodists. I made a dismal failure two years ago in preaching in a Wesleyan chapel. I was told that I ought to have shouted: "London for Christ!" which is not exactly my style. The Unitarians are very scholarly and literary; there are few better sermons to read than those of some of their divines, such as Martineau and J. H Thom; but they require an educated congregation. Some learned theologians make the mistake of putting difficult thoughts into very simple language. This is not what the uneducated want; they like the thought to be simple, but are rather flattered by a few words of Greek or Hebrew now and then. One village congregation once complained that their new vicar never gave them "the actual words of the Holy Ghost," like his predecessor.

There is, of course, an abundance of anecdotes about preachers and preaching, but it is a pity to treat such a serious subject frivolously. I will allow myself just two, which illustrate the pitfalls into which the choice of a text may lead the preacher. A retired Colonial bishop told me that at one time he sometimes chose the most fantastic texts, to excite the attention of his audience. On one occasion he was

telegraphed for to take the Sunday service at a distant station, and packed up in a hurry the first sermon he found, which had the strange text: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away," from the Canticles. As soon as he gave out this verse, there was an unrestrained shout of laughter from the congregation. He returned to the vestry fuming, where he was joined by the churchwarden, who said to him: "Well, bishop, we are sincerely grateful to you for coming at such short notice, and, if you will allow me to say so, for the singular appropriateness of your text."

"What do you mean?" said the bishop, still angry.

"Why, bishop, I suppose you know the unfortunate circumstance which obliged us to send for you?"

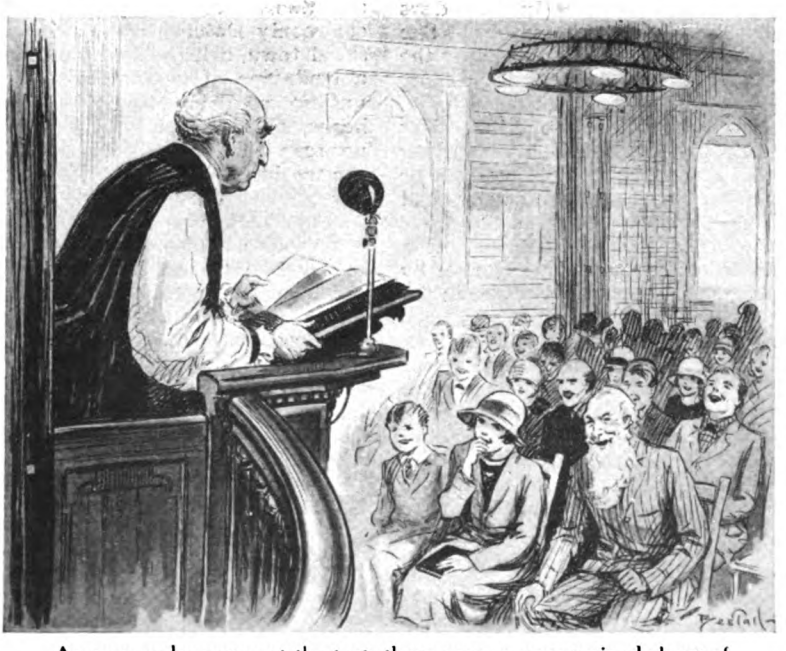
"I know nothing about it."

"Well, the curate has run off with the vicar's daughter, and the vicar is after them!"

The other story is of a preacher at an ordination who chose as his text: "There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" He had not noticed that the very juvenile archdeacon was presenting five men for the priesthood and two for the diaconate—a poor number, certainly.

But enough of the light side of the subject. It is a mistake to despise preaching, as many of our younger clergy do. There is perhaps no professional work that is done quite so badly as the sermons in many of our churches, and the cause is simply want of study and preparation. To inflict a feeble and almost impromptu discourse upon a congregation shows a great want of courtesy; our people have a right to the best that we can give them. They can all read, of course, but most of them never do, except the newspapers; and it is a mistake to suppose that even simple folk do not think seriously about religious and moral problems. The sermon can be made the most stimulating thing in their ordinary lives; they will listen, if there is anything worth listening to. It is nonsense to say that the preacher has no time to prepare his sermons; we can always make time for what we want to do, and this is, next to private interviews with troubled souls, perhaps the most important part of the parochial parson's duties. Nonconformist ministers, to do them justice, take more trouble about their sermons; but they are not always to be found when they are wanted during the week.

Nothing can make up for the want of real conviction; and no eloquence will give a man influence for good if he does not practise what he preaches. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of preaching; but only a saint can afford to preach so badly as many of our clergy do, and it is easier to preach decently than to be a saint.



As soon as he gave out the text, there was an unrestrained shout of laughter from the congregation.

The Last Fairy

By

CATHERINE AND FRANK WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY
ARTHUR WATTS

The authors of this story are the wife and son of Mr. H. G. Wells.

IN the late summer of a few years ago the last of the fairies looked over her wardrobe of disguises, selected that of an old apple-woman as the least threadbare, and went walking along a country road. Having yet some remnants of her magic power, the fairy did not find the apple-basket heavy. But she knew she was growing old. She had not been out in the world for a long time, and when she put on her disguise she had much the same feeling that our grandmothers had when they would say: "My dear, this is the very last summer I shall wear a *hat*." (In those days there were bonnets for the mature.) She had it in her bones that it was probably the last time she would go adventuring among human beings.

They were getting a bit beyond her. Her latest appearances on earth, though her memory was not so good as it used to be and she was not very clear about them, had been, she knew, uncomfortable on the whole and socially unsuccessful. She had got a young kitchenmaid into a lot of trouble by sending her magically to a ball, where in the hurry of coming away she dropped her shoe; and it being traced home to her, the poor girl lost her situation. Another time she had met a bright young Boy Scout who, in the course of business, had helped her across a crowded street, and to whom in return she had given three magic wishes; he had used the third wish to wish for three more and so on, until the poor old fairy had had to retire hastily to fairyland in a bankrupt state, and live very quietly and economically for several years to recover herself.

Such experiences had shaken her nerve. She resolved as she walked along the road to be careful this time, to remember that she wasn't young any more, and not to try anything difficult or dangerous in the magic way. Her Rodeo days were over. To-day she was just out for a little exercise in the sunshine; perhaps she might bring off a few pretty surprises among these mortals, perform a few kindly acts. That was the idea. That, she insisted, really was the idea. Nothing like—and the old fairy's eyes brightened maliciously at a memory or two. No, no, of course not! Nothing like that. *That* was ages ago.

She looked about her. During her long life she had seen a good deal of the world, and this bit of it, she thought, looked uncommonly Dutch. She was approaching a small town, a little town neatly planted on a landscape of neat fields; there was no untidiness about its outskirts, no dust heaps, no sheds or *débris*. It hung on a neat canal like a bead on a string. Presently she would see some people. It was quite a long time since she had met human beings; some of them were delightful, but some of them were very odd. Occasionally one simply had to use extreme measures with them in self-defence. All sorts of things one had to do. Change them into toads, for instance. *Had* to. A most useful device.

A qualm of anxiety came into the old fairy's mind. Did she remember now how that toad charm went?

Not far along the road in front of her was the hind part of a horse. It protruded from a stable; she could not see its fore part nor the ostler who was inside, putting a collar over its head. Just to see if she had got it right the old fairy pronounced what she remembered as the Toad Charm.

The result surprised her. The hind-quarters of the horse dropped about a foot in height, the legs bent to an acuter angle, great claws spurted from the hoofs, and the

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short stump of hairy brown tail shot out into a great scaly blue and green and gold appendage some six feet long. The dragon breathed for the first time in that character, and the ostler was badly burnt.

The ostler squealed and dropped the harness, and the dragon, backing out of the shed, snorted more fire, unfurled great leathery wings, and flapped heavily away over the red-tiled roofs with a noise like books being slapped together at spring-cleaning time. The fairy was slightly disconcerted for a moment, and then she laughed very heartily.

The ostler, rushing out of the stable, saw an old apple-woman. "Seen my horse, missus?" he called out to her.

Now one of the fairy's maxims was "Never explain, never apologize." Feigning deafness, she merely plodded on, and the ostler, wasting no more time on her, ran off in the direction he supposed his property had bolted.

The old fairy followed, a little uneasy at what she had done. Letting loose a dragon was, after all, a serious matter. It was exactly the kind of incident she had been determined to avoid. Funny how old habits—— Anyhow, it was done now. With genuine regret she tried her best to think how she had gone wrong. She believed she knew what mistake she had made. The two charms were alike—up to a point. She was sorry about it. Sometimes these dragons did a lot of mischief. She must follow it up, and put things right again. She would find the dragon, change him into a toad first for convenience of carriage, take him back to the stable, and there restore his horse shape.

THE incident, however, though unsuccessful in its main intention, had refreshed her and increased her confidence, and given her that natural satisfaction that follows the exercise of one's gifts. She went up a narrow cobbled street—looking for trouble, a harsh critic might say. It was a cheerful street. Its houses were painted brightly in green and white and red and blue; they had high-pitched, gabled roofs, and pinks and geraniums dangled gaily from their window-boxes. A man in a white linen overall came round a corner trundling a barrow of big round cheeses coloured like huge oranges. She passed the canal over a low bridge, and met more and yet more white-clad men trundling and carrying these orange-coloured cheeses. And then she came into a market square so piled about with glossy, golden cheeses, on stalls, on barrows, on the ground, that it seemed as if the sun had suddenly burst out, though indeed it had been shining all the time. There were ruddy apples too, and bright green cabbages, and tethered in temporary stalls were black and white cows with velvety skins. At one side of the market square was the canal, and barges loaded with flowers and more orange cannon-ball cheeses were moored by a flight of steps.

The old fairy was delighted with the pretty place. She felt that she might find her chance here to do a lot of nice magics, little things people couldn't do for themselves, and that they would be grateful to her for thinking of. She would be the most wonderful Good Fairy that ever was. She thought that she wanted to do good out of the sweetness of her own nature, but, as a matter of fact, it was partly a way of smothering her uneasy conscience at having let loose a dragon on these innocent townsfolk, and partly it was a way of shirking the extreme difficulty of her immediate duty, which was plainly to find the animal. But she let herself be distracted. People were standing about gossiping to one another, and glancing up every now and then at the big clock in the turret of the Town Hall. Suddenly it boomed ten times, and above its brazen face a large gilt angel raised a trumpet to his mouth and blew a clockwork blast. A door sprang open, a procession of wooden soldiers on horseback came forth, jerked round a platform, and went in again, the door slammed upon them, the angel blew his trumpet once more, and with a burst of noise and chatter the market opened.

Women in snowy lace caps bought the cabbages, and men in baggy trousers chaffered the cheeses, and carried them to and fro piled on wooden trays. The old fairy put down her apple-basket at a convenient place where she could sit on a low parapet, and turned over her stock-in-trade. It was a long time since she had taken out the apple-basket, but it looked all right. There were some apples of particularly delicious flavour, she knew, suitable for good children, and there were some others equally pleasant to look at containing maggots for bad children. There were some that were just apples, to give to the police, and there were a few that were very special, one that sent you to sleep for a hundred years, one that contained a dose of the precious Elixir of Youth, and one small poisoned one for ogres. The old fairy put these at the back, arranged the others to her satisfaction, and sat down looking very simple and countrified and old-world indeed.

Presently she noticed that an aged woman with a market-basket had singled her out. She was a chubby old lady with cheeks like rosy apples themselves, and she smiled at the fairy as if they were two people

who were sure to get on together. She was accompanied by an old man in a large, flapping felt hat and a gay crimson waistcoat, and hanging on to them was a pig-tailed child with a freckled face. Directly the old fairy saw her she knew she wasn't a good child. She had hooked her arm into her grandmother's, and was lugging the old lady back to a sweet-stuff stall.

"Presently, Priscilla," said the nice old lady, with her eye on the apples.

"No! want it now," whined this unpleasant child.

"Silence, Priscilla!" said the grandfather sternly, and looked so awful for a moment that even Priscilla was cowed. The old lady turned to the fairy.

"And how much might you be asking for these?" she said.

The fairy named a price rather less than she heard the other apple-sellers asking, as a kindness to the nice old lady. Being a fairy, she knew nothing about the wickedness of underselling.

The offensive Priscilla crept up to a cat sitting on the parapet, pulled its tail hard and suddenly, and jumped back to her grandparents out of reach. There was a piercing "miaw" and the cat flew along the parapet and up a wall. The fairy saw all this, but the grandparents did not. Grandfather was greeting a friend with long sweeps of his dignified hat, and grandmother was buying the apples. The bad child then sidled up to a near stall, where a milk churn was standing full of milk. She gave it a push, it went over the back of the stall with a terrific clatter and deluge of milk, and Priscilla was back beside her grandmother gazing at the apples before anyone except the old fairy realized what was happening.

THE purchased apples were now in the old lady's basket. Priscilla caught sight of them, snatched one out of the basket, and bit it in half before anyone could stop her.

Very properly it was full of maggots. A nice child could not have had such an apple, but if it could have, it would never have behaved with the explosive vehemence of Priscilla.

"Pris-*cilla!*" cried her grandmother, snatching away her skirt.

Priscilla yelled with nausea and fury, and stamped her feet. Her grandfather was diverted from his conversation and turned round upon this scene. He aimed a smack at Priscilla, but missed.

The old lady turned apologetically to the fairy. "It wasn't a very nice apple, was it?" she said, reproachfully.

The fairy was sorry to have hurt the old lady's feelings. "It looked quite sound and sweet," she said. "And I don't think *you'll* find a bad one among them, ma'am. Let me give you another to make it up." She turned over the apples in her basket to pick out a fine one. But a great disturbance broke out.

Grandfather had been scolding Priscilla, and Priscilla had kicked him. Whereupon grandfather grabbed at Priscilla and tried to shake her. This all made a lot of noise.

"I'm afraid she's a naughty little girl," said the fairy to the old lady, sympathetically. "You have a deal of trouble with her, I can see."

"Well, we mustn't be too hard on children," said the gentle old lady. "I'm sure I wish I was young again myself sometimes, that I do. And I dare say I was a trouble enough to my poor mother."

The fairy had picked out the best apple she could find to give the old lady, but now she had a sudden idea. Here surely was a chance to give this delightful old personage the wish of her heart. She took out the apple containing the Elixir of Youth.

"This is the one I'd choose for you, my dear," she said. "Do taste it now."

The grandmother laughed. "Too hard for my old teeth," she said.

"Just try it," urged the fairy, magically softening the apple.

The old lady bit the apple gingerly, and looked surprised. It was soft and very juicy, like a ripe peach, and broke in her hand so that she had to push it nearly all into her mouth for tidiness' sake. And then she disappeared!

The dear old lady had suddenly and completely disappeared, and in her place stood a duplicate Priscilla, the two children standing side by side like a pair of pictures for a stereoscopic view. At this surprising sight the grandfather uttered a cry of rage. "Magic! Witchcraft!" he spluttered, shaking his fist at the fairy and waving his stick, and he turned round and called out to everyone about him.

"There's a witch here!" he shouted. "A witch!"

People turned their heads and stared. The fairy realized with a touch of panic that things might be awkward for her. "Witch! witch!" yelled the old man, beside himself. All the crowd was now turning round on the group, but at first, seeing the duplicate Priscillas, they thought he was shouting "which?"—a very natural mistake—and merely wondered aloud and jocosely at the excitement displayed by the grandfather of twins. "He dunno which is which," explained a bright-witted cheesemonger with a happy laugh.

But the fairy saw there was not a minute to lose. She grasped all her forces and

wished the old gentleman's mouth stopped with—with——

What could she stop it with? He was opening his mouth to shout again. "Oh—the nearest thing!" she completed hastily.

It was a cheese. It happened to be the bottom corner cheese of a pile that was arranged on the next stall in the shape of a truncated pyramid. It was the critical key cheese, so to speak, in the base of the heap. When it hopped off the stall into the mouth of Priscilla's grandfather the cheeses above it began to slide and dollop one by one off the stall to the ground and roll along the sloping pavement of the market-place to the stone steps. Under the steps was a convenient barge. Dollop, dollop, down the steps they went one after the other, very nicely and methodically on the whole, into that barge. The bargee had just finished unloading his cheeses into crates on the quay. He was at the farther end of the barge with his back to the steps; he stood upright and stretched himself, and wiped his mouth expectantly on the back of his hand. "Ah-you-ay!" he called to a small boy who might run the necessary errand. As he did so the first of the travelling cheeses entered the barge and rolled between his feet. He stooped again and picked it up and added it to his pile on the quay, and as he did so another rolled into its place, and in its turn another.

"Oo-*er*!" said the bargee, at the twenty-third cheese.

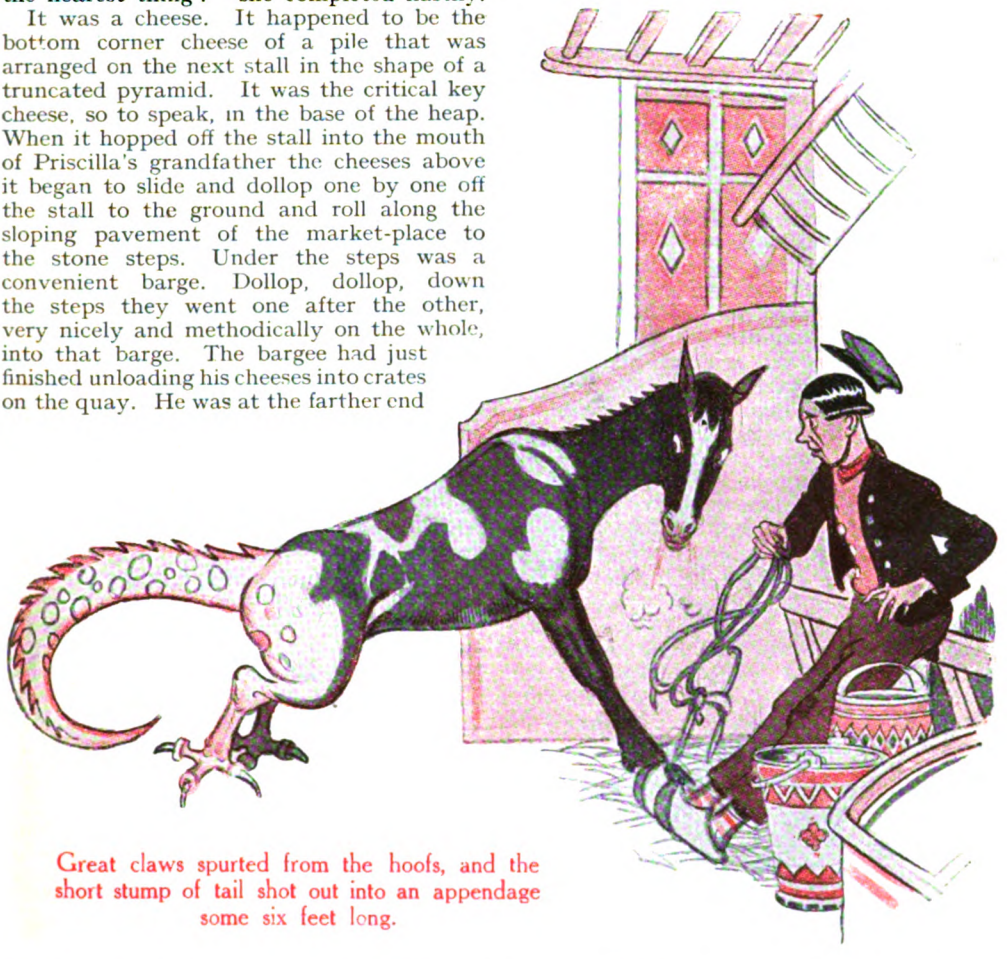
It occurred to him to look round.

His head was beneath the level of the pavement. All he saw was a walloping rush of cheeses into his barge, coming quicker and quicker till they descended in spate and were bumping him heartily about the knees.

There is an expression sometimes used in musical notation—*cadenza*. It means that trills and ornamental roulades may be indulged in at that point to the limit of the singer's accomplishment. So instead of putting down here what the bargee said, I will just write: *Cadenza*.

Meanwhile a happy crowd rejoiced at the amusing coincidence that, on the collapse of a stall piled with cheeses, one of these had bounced up and sideways, hit a choleric old gentleman in the face, and embedded itself between his teeth. The stall-keeper was annoyed at first at this accident to his stock-in-trade, but he became convulsed with merriment as he realized what had not, as a matter of fact, happened.

"Don't you be troubling yourself," he spluttered to the old man, who had grasped



Great claws spurted from the hoofs, and the short stump of tail shot out into an appendage some six feet long.

the cheese with both hands and was trying to wrench it out of his teeth. "I'll give it yer!" He turned to the crowd. "He can keep it now, I don't mind."

"'Tis a good breakfast you've got there, Mynheer," shouted someone.

The old gentleman tugged away at the cheese, but he could not dislodge it. He could not even see over it; a baleful eye came sideways round its glossy curve, and glared at the fairy. The newly-created Priscilla wept, but her prototype was looking interested and happy.

"'Tis a fresh one," said the stall-keeper, amid new roars of laughter.

That, thought the perturbed fairy, is something. And, she continued, applying one of her most used maxims, things might be worse. In a moment she would be able to think of some way of keeping his mouth shut more comfortably.

That first, and then something could be done quickly to straighten out this Priscilla muddle. But before there was time for thinking, her first mistake added itself to the confusion. A noise up above them, like the imitation off-stage of a galloping horse in a provincial theatre, grew in volume and interrupted the innocent merriment of the crowd; a great shadow swept across the sunny market-place, volumes of smoke came over the Town Hall roof, and the dragon sailed into view. It tried to alight on the roof ridge, missed it, and scrabbled about to get a foothold, dislodging several tiles and breathing sootily as if its wick wanted trimming.

"'Tis a big bird and no mistake," said a matter-of-fact person.

"Look at the smuts on my apron!" said a good hausfrau.

"Ooooh, how bew-tiful!" said the original Priscilla, awestruck.

"Now that," said a naturalist looking out of a third-floor window through his spectacles, "is not a heron."

"Why are they all making such a fuss about a cloud?" said a short-sighted old lady. The dragon looked down and realized that a long time had elapsed since its last meal. "Thunder!" said the old lady. "I *said* it was a cloud."

NOW this dragon, that had been so abruptly called out of the limbo of legendary and discredited animals by the old fairy, was about as rusty and out of practice at its business as she was herself. It clung awkwardly to the roof, bewildered by the clamour from below. Dim instincts stirred within it. Something, it knew, was expected of it—but what? It must have felt rather as one does when, to amuse the company, one is led into a room blindfolded and "willed" by tittering friends. The dragon caught sight of the gilt angel on the clock tower. Was that it? He plunged at it, grasped it in his claws, tore it easily from its anchorage, and sailed off with it across the red roofs. He spoilt a lot of tulips just outside the town, where he sat for a time forcing this indigestible meal into his mouth.

It was a tough morsel. The angel's pedestal disappeared at last, very like the end coach of an overladen train struggling into a tunnel.

The bad child gave it a push, and it went over with a terrific clatter and deluge of milk.

But the fairy was immensely relieved by this turn of affairs. She felt that there might have been an accident here that would have really spoilt her day. The dragon might have taken off the wrong Priscilla and eaten her. Or anybody. Something too difficult even for a fairy to put right again. Whereas now, if they would only give her time, if they would only stop pushing and shouting and give her time to think——

"Hi, stop him!" shouted the ostler, appearing suddenly running from the end of a street and pointing to the trail of smoke that wound up the dragon's exit. "That's my horse."

"No, no, mister, that warn't no *horse*," explained a bystander kindly.

"Corse it was my horse!" shouted the ostler. "Bolted. Why couldn't you hold him, somebody? You see a horse running away and nobody's got the gumption——" (*Cadenza.*)

He was so insistent that one or two men standing round began to wonder why indeed they hadn't somehow thought of holding the animal until its rightful owner came.

"I dunno," said one.

"Seemed a bit wild-like," said another.

"Thought it was a bird, maybe," nearly said another—till he realized half through the sentence what palpable nonsense he was talking, and ended with a helpful clearing of the throat.

"Which way'd it go?" demanded the ostler; and then he caught sight of the old fairy. The fairy had not liked the look in the ostler's eye; she felt she couldn't think while he was there so near to her, and so she was very busily and quietly packing up her apples and preparing to slip away without bothering anybody.

"That's the old woman!" he shouted, leaping towards her. "That's the old woman who scared my horse. Mischievous old witch! She come along behind my horse, wot's as quiet usually as any animal could be, and she made it jump."

He threw out his hand to grasp her by the shoulder.

The fairy was alarmed. "Go back!" she thought she said, but without knowing it she spoke those simple words in her native tongue.

The effect was immediate. The ostler recoiled even as he touched her, stood for a moment shouting:—

A walloping rush of cheeses coming quicker and quicker.

"Jump — it — made — she — and — be — could—animal—any—as—usually quiet as wot's horse my behind, along come she, witch old mischievous, horse my scared who woman old the that's!" and then started running backwards very rapidly across the market-place with his eyes glaring at her until he reached the end of the street and, still running backwards, disappeared.

"Dear, dear!" said the old fairy, and sat down again behind her basket. "I must have said the Backward Spell." The lighter-minded portion of the crowd, convinced that the ostler was a merry fellow escaped from a travelling circus, laughed and slapped each other and ran after him out of the square. This relieved pressure and removed a good deal of noise, and the old fairy was just getting her breath again when the dragon came flustering back over the roofs and dropped limply into the market-place. Its throat ached, it was thoroughly uncomfortable, it felt a queer disposition to get alongside human beings and have its nose rubbed and be given a hot bran mash. Then perhaps this nubbly feeling inside would disappear. Down among all these people there must be someone of importance who could do this thing. And as if in answer to the helpless instinct of this dumb animal, a personage in a long robe and gold-laced hat came pacing with great dignity just at that very moment out of the Town Hall. The dragon precipitated itself towards him.

"Oh! it's going to eat him!" cried the fairy in a panic. "Now for it! The Toad Charm!" She began it hurriedly—too hurriedly. The red and rolling eye of the dragon, the fiery breath, the yawning and terrible jaws studded with pointed, glittering teeth, peeled off its head like a plum skin, and revealed the placid visage of a thoroughbred Dutch cow. "That isn't right!" flashed through the fairy's mind, even in mid-sentence, and she altered the end of her spell. The black and white splotches that were spreading rapidly along the

The dragon tore the angel on the clock tower from its anchorage and sailed off with it.

back of the animal were stopped midway, its hindquarters collapsed to half their size, and a mass of spiky quills shot out and enveloped them.

Priscilla, alone of all the spectators, possessed that simple directness of intellect to know what she was seeing when she saw it. "Cowcupine," said Priscilla.

Cowcupine, or whatever the *mésalliance* might be, it had no powers of flight, and its bulky form hurtled down on the top of the unfortunate personage and pinned him to the ground.

"Horses like that oughtn't to be allowed about," said the matter-of-fact person.

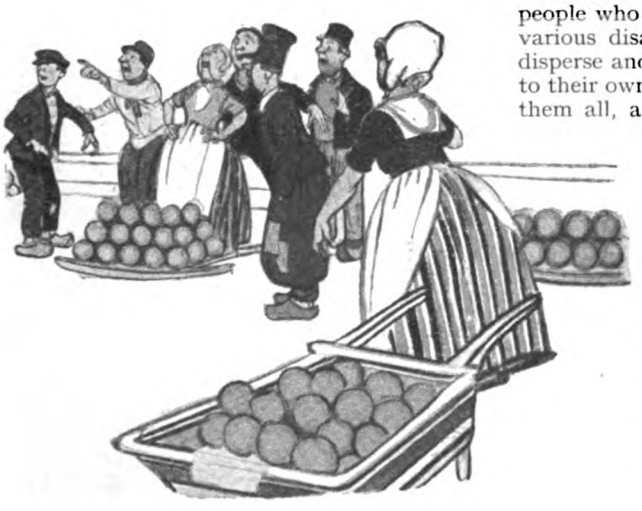
"Somebody will get knocked down," said the short-sighted old lady.

The naturalist heard a noise and glanced out; but as it only came from the ground he turned back to his bird-stuffing.

"Now I've made another mistake," thought the fairy. And then she had a flash of insight. "Am I perhaps doing more harm here than good?" she wondered.

PEOPLE were laughing. The fairy could not see what they were laughing at, but it seemed to be at the struggles of the creature that still wallowed helplessly over the gold-laced and important personage. No one understood its peculiar difficulty. For as a cow gets up hindquarters first and a porcupine gets up forequarters first, it follows that this unfortunate combination could not get up at all. The naturalist would have been able to explain this to everyone, if he had not been so busy stuffing.

"They oughtn't to laugh at that gentleman," said the fairy. "They mustn't laugh at him." But they went on laughing and the gold-laced personage went on struggling.



"If only it hadn't been something so silly!" she said, stamping her feet. "If it had been some splendid, noble animal that had run up to him trustingly. Like an elephant, or——"

The important personage was none too pleased when the bulk above him heaved, swayed, and resettled itself, and getting his head twisted round he peered up and saw that it was an elephant that encumbered him.

"I didn't mean that!" cried out the distracted fairy, though no one was listening to her. "Stop! I didn't mean it! Oh, I am losing my head!" she wound up.

She made a great effort to collect herself. "You," she said, concentrating on the elephant, "be smaller, *smaller*, the smallest animal there is."

And the elephant disappeared. . . .

"I had just got hold of the bridle when the horse bolted again," said the matter-of-fact person over his mug of ale that evening, telling the whole affair just as it did not happen to his neighbour. "Bolted right out of the Square, and we never saw it no more."

"Went back to its stable most likely," said his neighbour, knocking out his pipe, and thinking it a dull tale.

The personage was helped up. He stood for a moment while his hat was looked for and brushed up and given to him. As soon as he was erect again the crowd became wonderfully silent and respectful. He looked at them as if he was going to make a speech. Then he seemed restless. . . .

And disappeared into the Town Hall hastily, scratching.

"Bother!" said the fairy, realizing his trouble. "I couldn't even manage that business properly."

She sat down by her apple-basket, and the people who had crowded together about the various disasters she had caused began to disperse and drift away and turn back again to their own affairs. The old fairy looked at them all, and suddenly she felt very tired.

Things hadn't gone quite as she had intended. That dragon business was over, anyhow, thank goodness; she had put that mistake right. Now she would like a rest. It wasn't so warm and sunny in this world nowadays as it used to be. The world had changed; there were not the hot summer days now that she remembered in her youth. It was no good catching cold; she had better go home. Tomorrow, if it was finer——

She covered up the apples,

keeping very resolutely out of her mind the thought that this was her last good-bye to earth. She got up slowly, and prepared to go.

There was a touch upon her arm.

She turned, and there was a Priscilla, looking at her pleadingly. Ah! yes, she had forgotten that little disaster. But which Priscilla was this?

"Do you believe in fairies?" asked the old fairy.

The Priscilla nodded, and her eyes were brimming with tears.

A happy inspiration came to the old fairy, and she remembered what to say. The grandmother flashed back into existence, looked a little confused for a moment, and said, hesitatingly, as though she did not quite know why:—

"Thank you!"

And then she smiled a farewell and turned away.

Well, that was better. One wasn't so played out, after all. The old fairy looked round the market-place again, and it came to her that it would be an effective and altogether splendid end to her visit to turn all these hundreds of piled yellow cheeses into solid gold, as a farewell present to these people who had been so amusing, and whom, without intending to, she had rather knocked about. It would astonish them to see an old apple-woman do that, a simple old woman who had been sitting there all the afternoon without their noticing her. And then she would depart, amid the plaudits of the populace. They would remember her always, gratefully and wonderingly. They would tell their children about her, and write a legend about her in long verses.

Now how did the gold charm begin?

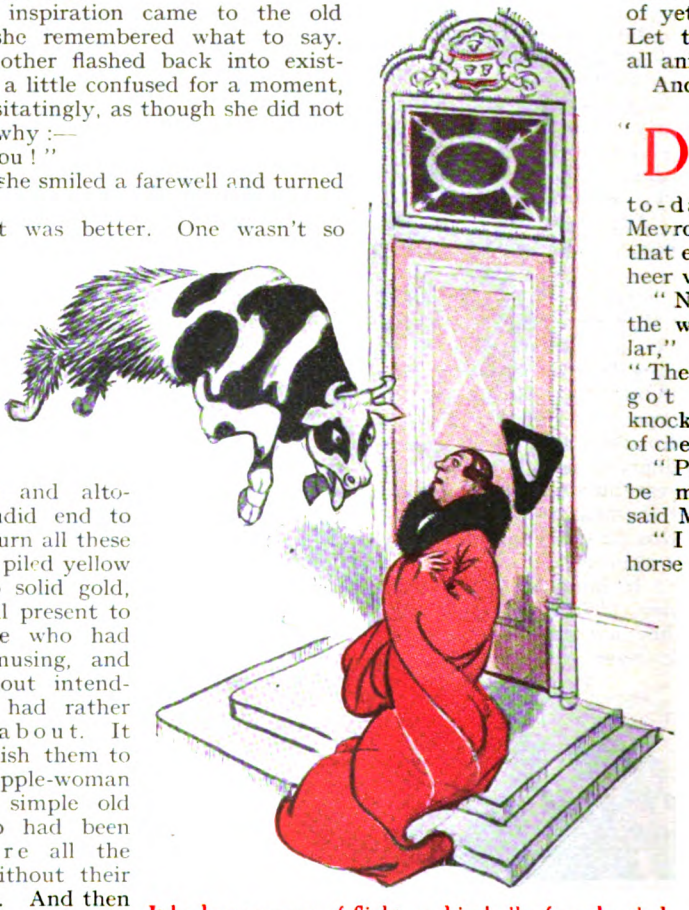
And then just in time she saw Priscilla's grandfather. He was sitting leaning on the parapet not far away, and he had given up tugging at the cheese in his mouth, and he was just crying big tears.

It would kill him. It would certainly kill him.

Well, well, she supposed she had better spend the little force she had left in releasing him. So she wished his cheese away, and as it happened that just then Priscilla's grandmother had come back to him and given a pull at it herself, he thought to the end of his days that it was by her cleverness that he was set free.

Was there anything else? The fairy looked round, and the big door of the Town Hall reminded her of yet another duty. Let the smallest of all animals be dead!

And then she went.



It had no powers of flight, and its bulky form hurtled down on the top of the unfortunate personage.

"DID anything happen at the market to-day?" asked Mevrouw van Teulype that evening of Mynheer van Teulype.

"Nothing out of the way in particular," he replied. "There was a horse got loose and knocked over a stall of cheeses."

"People ought to be more careful," said Mevrouw.

"I shall keep a horse when I'm big," said Priscilla to herself with her eye on a yellow-haired boy in the next garden. . . .

"After just the beginning," said the grandmother to a neighbour, "Priscilla was no trouble at all, all the morning."

"Well, so that's all blown over," said the fairy, at home again, tucking up her feet on a toadstool and putting a little, just a *very* little, drop of old nectar in her tea.

She had forgotten the ostler—still running backwards—for ever, who knows? But being in Holland, he was probably stopped by a canal before long. And water, as everybody knows, will wash away any but natural charms.

The UNDERSTUDY

By

J. J. BELL

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY DAVIS

I.

BOY youth, it would seem, can still be sentimental; even in these jingling, jangling days his food of love may be found in an English wayside flower, as well as in an American fox-trot——

"Can you," asked the bronzed young man of the Bond Street jeweller, "make for me a wild rose in pale gold, with a drop of rain in the heart? This gives an idea of what I want, and the size." He presented a little drawing in water-colour.

The jeweller glanced at it. "Certainly, sir; we can do this for you."

"How soon?"

"Say, in ten days."

The young man shook his head. "Can't you manage it by the twentieth? That is, seven days from now?"

"It shall be ready on the twentieth."

"Thank you. And the cost—roughly?"

The jeweller placed his long, beautiful fingers together, and smiled discreetly.

"The cost, sir, must largely depend on the size and quality of the—h'm!—drop of rain."

The young man smiled also, but a trifle ruefully.

"It will require to be rather a small drop," he said.

"If you will come this way," replied the jeweller, "I will show you a selection."

The original of the little water-colour sketch, and of the pale gold rose to be, had died six years ago. It had budded and bloomed and blushed its brief existence in a Surrey lane, wherein, on a midsummer morning, in the shine following a shower, a boy and girl had paused in their walk and looked into its gleaming heart.

Said the boy, who had the makings of a poet and artist, but whose job was timber:—

"It's like a tear, isn't it, Winifred?"

"You mean a jewel," said she.

He shook his head, then murmured, shyly:—

"Since I have found you fair and called you dear,
There is no lovely thing but holds a tear."

Her lips smiled. "Did you make that up, Ronald?"

His colour deepened. "It's doggerel, but it's true. Don't you think it's true, Winifred?"

"Not true; only pretty. See!" She flicked the stem of the rose. "Your tear is gone!"

"No; only broken. But a jewel would have been gone." Diffidently his arm went round her. "Winifred, I sha'n't see you again for five years—perhaps longer. I can't ask you for any big promise, and you have said I must not write to you. But when I do come home, it will be about this time of year, and I will send you a sign. If you are free, will you meet me here on the twenty-first of June? That's all I ask. Will you?"

If she did not promise in so many words, she allowed him to kiss her, for the first time. In a certain degree she was thrilled. And her eyes were like wet jewels—sapphires, which, by the way, are the coldest of gems.

So the boy went abroad to learn all about teak and other timbers, and gradually dropped making sketches and verses; and did very well for his employers, and fairly well for himself. Now and then, from friends, he had scraps of news of Winifred, and towards the end of the fourth year he learned that she had abandoned her college career for the stage. And in the following year he read in a newspaper of her swift success in

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musical comedy ; in a night, as it were, she had become a star.

Twelve months later he came home, and within a few hours of his landing in London was in a stall at the Planet Theatre. He was late in taking his seat, and his programme remained unopened ; but he knew her at once, and when the curtain fell finally he was almost certain that his boy's love had lived to become a man's.

It was on the next morning that he visited the Bond Street jeweller. Immediately thereafter he went North to see his own people.

II.

ON the afternoon of the twentieth of June you would—had you been admitted as an especially favoured person—have found Miss Winifred Thane at home, in her flat in Gloriana Mansions, reclining on a couch and being waited on by a girl whom you would have taken for her sister, but who was only her cousin. To recline and be waited on was neither Winifred's habit nor her pleasure at this time. A slight breakdown had recently, to her intense annoyance, meant a fortnight's absence from the theatre, and though she had now resumed her part, it seemed advisable to conserve her strength for the evenings by resting in the afternoons.

On a small table at her elbow lay a fan, a bunch of correspondence, also the torn wrappings of a registered packet, which the other girl had lately brought from the theatre. The other girl was now holding the contents of the packet—a jeweller's case, in which was embedded a brooch in the form of a pale gold rose, with a plain card bearing only the words : "To-morrow, at noon, if you will." She was gazing frowningly at the rose and listening with ill-disguised impatience to her cousin.

"You shall have a car from Daimler's and start in good time. There should be no difficulty in finding the place. It is quite near where we used to live. I can make a sort of map for the chauffeur. So that's that," concluded Winifred. "And now let's have tea."

The other girl closed the case and laid it on the table.

"Winifred, I can't do it—I won't!" "Oh, yes, you can—

"Winifred," she said, "it's impossible—outrageous."

"It's perfectly simple and not in the least outrageous. But you must have a new hat. After tea we'll get a taxi and——"

"Winifred, I can't do it—I won't!"

"Oh, yes, you can—you will, Monica. I take it that he is still the nice sentimental boy I used to know. He will appeal to you, and it will be a little adventure for you. You have always longed for an adventure. You will enjoy being my understudy

in real life. Would you mind ringing the bell ? "

Monica did not move. " Why," she asked, " will you not go yourself ? "

" I'm lunching with Mr. Hartman to-morrow."

" You can easily put it off."

" Mr. Hartman is going to ask me to marry him."

you will, Monica. You have always longed for an adventure."

" But you don't want awfully to marry Mr. Hartman."

" I don't know—yet. I certainly sha'n't give a definite answer to-morrow. Have you anything against him, Monica ? "

" No. He's devoted to you, he is not a fool, and he seems to be well-off."

" Very well-off ! And I do like him. I think I should say ' yes ' to-morrow—but for this." She threw her hand in the direction of the jeweller's case.

" Then you used to care—you still care —for this Mr. ——. Why, you'll have to tell me his name, Winifred ! "

" Ronald. He won't expect you to call him anything else, you know." Winifred smiled, and went on : " Yes, I used to like Ronald ; but then I have not seen him for six years. Nor have I heard from him, so that I have no notion as to what he has done with the years. But by this time to-morrow, probably, you will have told me all about him. Do ring the bell. I'm perishing of thirst."

Monica obeyed, came back, and sat down.

" Winifred," she said, warmly, " it's a perfectly horrible idea, and I'll have nothing to do with it."

" Oh, yes, you will, my dear," was the placid reply. " You're afraid he'll discover the deception ; but you need not give that a thought. Six years is a long time when one is young. Ronald will expect to find some little change, even if his memory of me has kept vivid ; at least, he will not be astonished or suspicious. It is not necessary that we should be as like as twins. People who saw you play my part last week have told me that the difference was almost all in our voices. So——"

" You are misunderstanding me, Winifred," Monica broke in. " I'd be ashamed to be found out, but ten times more ashamed to deceive him. Whatever you may be, he is evidently in earnest. If you had thought it over, I'm sure you would never have asked me to do such a thing."

There was a glint in Winifred's blue eyes, but her lips smiled.

"I don't require a week to think it over," she said, quietly, "and I am asking you to do it—to oblige me."

"I'm sorry, but I can't."

"H'm! One would think I had never done anything for you, Monica."

A little pause followed the remark. Monica flushed slightly; her eyes, of a deeper, milder blue than her cousin's, were troubled. Sadly she said: "You know you have done everything for me, Winifred."

It was fairly near the truth. Out of her own good fortune Winifred had done generously by Monica and her widowed mother; and she had taken Monica from the drudgery of a second-rate touring company and found for her a small part in this musical comedy which looked like running in London for ever. And Monica, having no illusions about her own talents—her recent performance of her cousin's part had been little more than conscientious mimicry, without a spark of brilliancy—was doubly grateful.

"You have done everything for me," she repeated, feeling helpless.

"Let us say that I have done a good deal," said Winifred. "Enough to admit of my asking something in return. What do you say?"

Monica said nothing. For a year she had lived with her cousin, doing her best to be useful, receiving many benefits, yet without acquiring any real intimacy. Previously she had thought of Winifred as an oddly unexcitable and self-centred girl, and the twelve months' companionship had taught her little more, save that behind all Winifred's generosity there was something hard—or, at least, uncompromising. And now sprang up the question: What if Winifred were to withdraw her favour? For herself Monica could face the old struggle again—there had been moments of late when the favour had tended to something like humiliation—but there was her mother to be considered.

"Come," said Winifred, pleasantly, yet with a touch of impatience, "you see you can't refuse me. I'm asking nothing terrible of you, nothing that will hurt anybody. Use your sense of humour, and you'll find it quite amusing. After all, it only means that you will be Me, more or less, for an hour or two."

"And that means that if I betray myself, I betray you. Is it worth the risk, Winifred?"

A maid came in with tea, and the question was not answered. When she had gone, Winifred said:—

"Now I'll give you the scenario and some stage directions, and then we shall have a little rehearsal of your part. And that's that!"

"Won't you give me till the morning to decide?"

"My dear Monica, you have already decided."

And perhaps it was so.

III.

AT twenty minutes past twelve Monica, aware that she must be near to the place, caught sight of a two-seater drawn up at the roadside and a tall young man smoking a cigarette, with an anxious expression of countenance; and she was tempted to bid the chauffeur increase speed. But her word had been given to Winifred, and, leaning forward, she told him to stop. Before the car had come to rest Ronald was at the door. She did not blush; on the contrary, she was rather pale.

"This is good of you, Winifred," he said, taking her hand. "I was beginning to despair—not that I had greatly hoped. Six years is a long time, and——" He broke off, opened the door, and helped her to alight.

For the life of her Monica could not have said a word just then. As a rule she took men calmly; but the present situation appalled her.

"But now that you have come," he resumed, "will you tell me what time you have to spare? I know you must have many engagements——"

With an effort, remembering that the question had been foreseen and the answer provided by Winifred, she replied:—

"As it happens, I'm not awfully rushed to-day; but I must be home not later than six."

"Splendid! That gives me the better part of the day. Well, now, shall we send your car home, and will you trust yourself to that little thing and me? We can run about the country, have lunch and tea at inns, and begin to get to know each other again. Will that do?"

THE car having gone, he led her down the road towards the two-seater.

"Don't think I'm going to dwell on the past, Winifred—I was a silly young chap, wasn't I?—but, just for the fun of the thing, I would ask you whether you can remember a certain rose-bush."

"I think I can," she answered softly, colouring for shame's sake. "It's the one on the left-hand side of that gate."

"Thank you," he said, warmly.

"And thank *you*," she said, faintly, drawing aside her coat so that he saw the pale gold rose on her breast. All of which was in accordance with her cousin's "scenario."

With an odd laugh he said: "Don't kill me with kindness, Winifred. . . . Shall

we take a run round and look for a nice little inn ? "

Thereafter it was easier for her. While driving he spoke little, and only of things impersonal, and during lunch his questions were all concerning her stage career, a topic which she did not seek to discourage.

" It's tremendously interesting to me," he said at the end of the meal. " I always knew you could act, but I must say it was a surprise when the news came to me out there, about two years ago; for I had got into the way of thinking of you as one destined for classical and mathematical honours. You remember how——"

" The news must have been a great shock to you," she interrupted, gravely.

He caught the smile in her eyes and returned it. " I wonder ! Perhaps there was a certain relief behind the shock. Perhaps I did at first fancy that a celebrated actress might be a little less unapproachable than a distinguished scholar. At all events, Winifred, you will allow me to get to know you again ? "

" Why, yes, if you wish," she replied, with something of her native frankness. " My coming here to-day is surely an answer to that question."

" I didn't flatter myself to that extent," he said. " A kindly impulse might have sent you here, only to regret it afterwards."

Then, greatly daring, she asked : " Do you think I have changed much ? "

" I must have time to answer that question properly," he returned. " Still, in

" This is good of you, Winifred," he said, taking her hand.

some ways you are different from my memory of you at seventeen."

"Naturally!"

"Yes; but I seem to *see* differences. Even your eyes——"

"What is the time, please?" Rather hurriedly she began to don her gloves. "And isn't it a pity to spend this lovely day indoors?"

"A crime!" he replied, accepting the little rebuff with admirable cheerfulness. "Let us start at once. We have time for an hour's run, a cup of tea somewhere, and then I promise to have you home by six."

"Very well," she said, and, unwilling to seem ungracious, added: "Thanks awfully for that delightful lunch. I enjoyed it immensely. Only, I'm a little tired of being the sole subject of conversation. At tea you must tell me about yourself."

THEY had tea in an old-fashioned garden. "Well, really," he said, when she began to ask questions, "compared with yours, my life during those six years has been so uneventful that there seems to be nothing worth telling."

"Do you still make sketches and write verses?" she inquired, with the slight hesitation that usually accompanied her remarks directly inspired by Winifred.

He laughed boyishly. "No, no! Nothing but good solid timber nowadays! Timber, timber all the time!"

"But not on your holiday?"

"I'm not so sure," he returned, more soberly. "I certainly came home on six months' leave, but things have cropped up—changes in the business—and it may be worth my while to be busy here. Also, it may be that I sha'n't have to go abroad again."

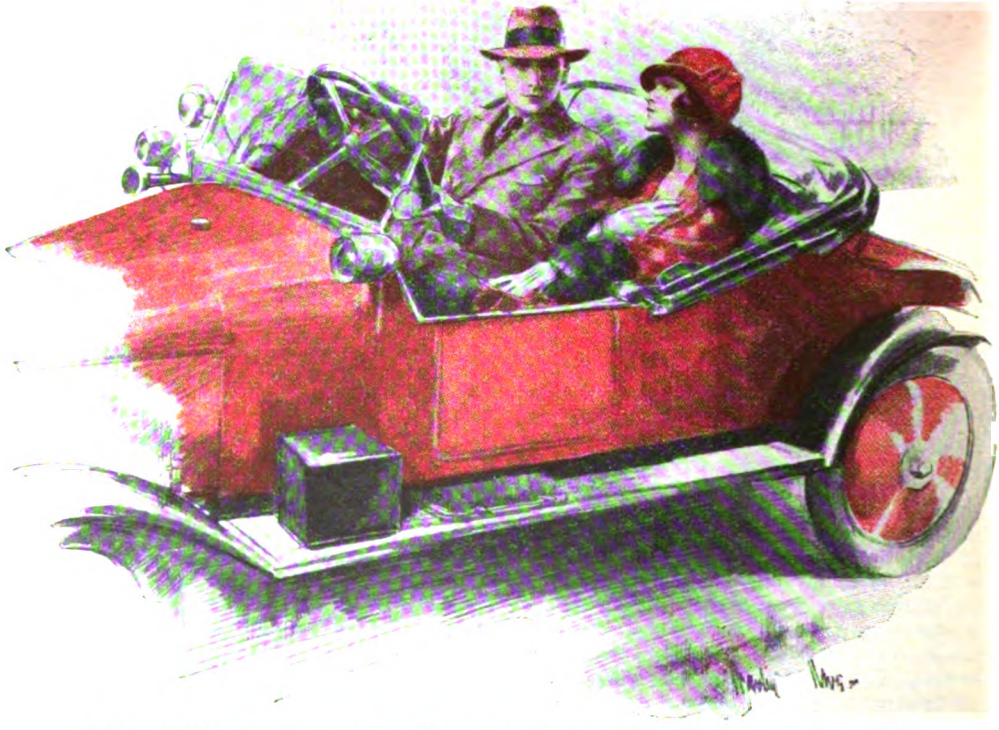
"You don't wish to go abroad again?" For an instant her eyes encountered his.

"Less now than ever," he said, softly. "However," with a change of tone, "that's all in the air. In the meantime I have a week to spend as I choose, so shall stay in London and go to the Planet every night!"

"Oh, no!"

"Why not?"

She made a quick recovery. "Well, if you must be foolish! It's not a bad show, but you'll be sick of it in less than a week."



"Since I left you, six years ago, I've never given two thoughts to any other girl."

"This letter offers me a position absurdly big for a man of my age—a position at home, too."

finding my glove I think I dropped it—perhaps coming in."

Here was an unlooked-for complication! He had seen her a week ago, when she was taking Winifred's part! And now, probably to-night, he would see Winifred as the Princess, and herself in the chorus! And, unless he were tone-deaf, he would know at once that the Princess singing to-night was not the Princess who had sung a week ago! He was not a stupid man; already she liked him; and she was not fond of untruths. Yet it was her business to mislead him if she could. At the same time she must say nothing to entangle Winifred

"I'll risk that. I thought it an uncommonly good show——"

"You have seen it?"

"Last week — the first night after I landed. What is the matter, Winifred?"

"Nothing. Would you mind

a bit vexed," she continued, "that you saw the show last week. I was in frightfully bad form; my voice was awful."

"Was it? If I said just what I thought of you as a Princess, you would probably be angry. By the way, I have noticed that you have not once used my name. Does that mean that you object to my calling you Winifred?"

"Why, no. But somehow—after six years—well, at any rate"—with the semblance of a smile—"you should give me credit for a little—shyness. But I will try now to call you Ronald."

"I'll be glad," he murmured, looking

afterwards. It was being borne upon her that the plot was as good as discovered, when Ronald came back empty-handed.

"I'm so sorry. My glove was here all the time. Let me give you some hot tea," she said. "I'm

thoughtful. "In some ways," he said, abruptly, "you make me feel as though I had never known you at all."

It seemed to Monica then that the ice was even thinner than she had feared. She was afraid to make a move, as it were. There was silence till she said :—

"Is it not time we were going ?"

He looked at his watch, and she fancied that he was hurt. "Very well," he said ; "I can drive slowly." He got up and held her coat for her.

She did not want to seem ungracious. Rising, she said :—

"You have given me a delightful day, Ronald, and I've never thanked you properly for this." She touched the pale gold rose. "I do love the drop of dew."

"It wasn't dew," he said quickly, almost sharply. "It was rain."

And now it was as though the ice cracked under her feet. Barely she refrained from exclaiming, "Winifred called it dew!" "Yes, rain, of course," she said, lamely; "Thanks awfully for it."

A trifle, Ronald told himself, and he was an ass to be hurt by it. But presently the sting passed —or at least subsided.

"Winifred, you probably guess what brings me here now."

The pace to town was so leisurely that there was no reason for continuous silence, and Monica exerted herself to talk of the London theatres, the latest plays, the new stars and old, and so forth. In other words, she sought to keep away from the ice. But Ronald drew her back to it.

"Winifred," he put in, when she was trying to think of a fresh topic, "I know you must have no end of engagements, but I'm asking you to spare me all the time you can in the coming week. As I've already said, I want to get to know you again, and I want you, if you will, to get to know me. It's the simple truth that since I left you, six years ago, I've never given two thoughts to any other girl, and when I look at you now I think I never shall. But please be assured that if you give me your company I sha'n't bore you with what you once called my 'sentimental talk.' My behaviour for the week shall be above reproach." He smiled and became grave. "But in fairness to you, as well as to myself, I ought to ask you a question. Is there anybody else ? —seriously, I mean."

"N-no," she whispered—and immediately remembered about Winifred and Mr. Hartman.

"Thank God !" he said under his breath ; and aloud : "Will you give me all the time you can spare ?"

"Yes," she replied, wondering whether

that would be the right answer from Winifred's point of view.

"Bless you! And will you lunch with me to-morrow?"

"I'll be very pleased," she said, with confidence, for the invitation had been foreseen by Winifred.

"Now I'm happy," he declared.

She glanced sidelong at the honest, kindly brown face, and, before she knew, the words were out—words certainly not even suggested in the "scenario":—

"You're a funny boy, Ronald."

And for the moment she forgot that she was only an understudy, and joined in his laugh as he cried:—

"That's the nicest thing you've said to me yet, Winifred!"

Under her direction they came to Gloriana Mansions, with ten minutes to spare.

"I'm sorry I can't ask you to come up," said Monica, repeating her lines, as it were. "I live with a cousin who is also in the show—and she's not very fit at present."

"Then I shall be waiting for you here, at one, to-morrow."

"Yes, please."

"And, of course, I'll see you to-night—from the stalls."

Monica smiled—pathetically. "I must try to sing better than I sang a week ago."

"You won't look better," he said, bluntly. "Might I not see you after the show, Winifred—if only to drive you home?"

"No—Ronald," she answered, according to the book. "Good-bye till to-morrow."

At her entrance Winifred, who had been resting, sat up.

"Well?"

"Well," replied Monica, sitting down as one wearied, "you've got to marry him. He's far nicer than Mr. Hartman, or anyone you've met in London, and there's no doubt about his being in love with you. Six years—I think it's wonderful!"

"Thanks!" Winifred laughed. "But you've begun at the wrong end. Tell me exactly what happened from the moment you met him."

Monica gave a fairly clear and detailed account of the day.

"Pity about the dew-drop," Winifred remarked. "I admit it was my mistake. He seemed vexed, you say?"

"So vexed that I felt sure he cared. But the worst moment was when he told me he had seen the show last week."

"It was clever of you to say you had been in bad voice!"

"It only put off the evil hour. He's bound to find out to-night. Oh, Winifred, it was a vile idea!"

"Don't worry. We'll go early to the theatre, and you shall come to my room, and if I can't make you up as my twin, I'll retire from the stage!"

"That, if it succeeds, only puts it off till to-morrow, when you meet him for lunch."

'But I'm not going to meet him for lunch."

'You're not——?"

"Villars and Laurence are coming here to go over a new comedy——"

"You can put them off."

"I might have put them off, if you had told me what I particularly wanted to know about Ronald."

"You mean, his position in business?"

"To be even more precise, his financial position."

"Winifred, how can you? I told you he seemed to be getting on well. Did you expect me to ask him for—for figures?"

"Be calm, my dear There are ways of asking, and other ways of finding out. You will probably learn, without asking, in a day or two."

"But I sha'n't see him again"

Winifred took up her fan and used it in a lazy fashion. "Monica, I've told you before that I would never marry a poor man, and only a very rich one could persuade me to leave the stage."

"It isn't possible that Ronald can be *very* rich. He's too young," said Monica.

"You never can tell. Ronald may be going to be very rich before long, and I might be inclined to take the risk. But I'm not going to see Ronald until I know. And—I have promised Dick Hartman his answer on Wednesday night next week. So there you have it in the good old nutshell!"

Monica got up. "Winifred, you must be mad," she cried, "if you imagine that I will see him again. It's far too dangerous!"

"You used to pray for an adventure," said Winifred, "and this is one. But there need be no danger, if you keep your head, as you have done to-day. You are going to carry on, Monica, until——"

"No!"

Winifred's fan went a little faster. "Don't force me to remind you that you owe me something," she said, without harshness. "I don't like being vulgar—but I sent your mother fifty pounds to-day. It's her birthday, you told me, and she ought to have a change this hot weather."

"Oh, Winifred!" exclaimed Monica in a breaking voice, and ran from the room.

Winifred threw down the fan, smiled, and stretched herself.

IV.

IN the restaurant Ronald was saying:—

"Yes, I'll allow that you sang better last night; but what had you done with your pretty little ways?"

"My what?"

"I can't think how else to describe them. You ought to know. I mean the little quaint movements and looks that you used the first time I saw you—the sort of things that would bring laughs and tears from a stone."

Monica, who felt like bringing wild laughter and wilder tears from herself, shook her head. "I can't think what you refer to," she said. "But I told you I was in frightfully bad form that night last week."

"I don't wish you any more bad form," said Ronald, "but I do wish you had seen some of its effects on yourself. Last night you were all grace as the Princess, but the little natural nervous touches, which to some extent describes what I mean, were gone."

"I don't suppose anyone ever plays a part like the Princess twice in exactly the selfsame way," said Monica, feeling that she was floundering. Knowing the point must come up sooner or later, she went straight for it by asking: "Did you notice my cousin?"

"Oh, yes! She is extraordinarily like you. Indeed, it struck me once or twice that she had some of your little ways of last week. But she has not your grace."

"I—I told you she was not very fit at present," stammered Monica, and blessed the waiter for a timely interruption.

"Will you come on the river to-morrow?" he asked later.

"*Matinée.*" She was glad, then sorry.

"Confound *matinées!* But what about the river on Friday?"

"I'd love it," she replied. It was defeat, she knew, and tried to feel ashamed. She knew that she would go with him on the river to please not Winifred, but herself—for her own sake, not her mother's.

They were taking coffee when he said:—

"I suppose you're hopelessly in love with the stage?"

And off her guard she answered:—

"In love! Perhaps I was, my first six months of it. Now it's just a way of earning a living."

In the pause she realized what she had said; she glanced up in alarm.

He was lighting a cigarette, and she did not take heed of the faint frown of puzzlement between his brows.

So they went on the river on Friday. Saturday—another confounded *matinée!*—held but one bright hour for Ronald—tea time. But Sunday they spent in the country, and all Monday, too. Tuesday was wet, and they stayed in town, going after

lunch to a *matinée* which was not at all "confounded." On Wednesday they were early on the river, and came back to town in the afternoon. Incidentally, Ronald called at his hotel for a letter which, it being a business one marked urgent, he asked permission to read in the taxi. He read eagerly, and had barely finished when the cab stopped at the place chosen for tea. As they entered he said :—

"I have to go to Canada on Friday, and shall be away for six weeks."

"That pleases you, does it not?" she said, when they had taken seats in a remote corner of the lounge.

All day he had appeared light-hearted, but now he looked at her gravely. "I don't know yet. I should have liked another week here."

It was the first little feast together which they had failed to enjoy. An awkwardness seemed to have come between them. For a while they exchanged trivialities; then they fell silent. At last he said :—

"This letter offers me all I was hoping for, and a great deal more. It offers me a position absurdly big for a man of my age—a position at home, too. Apart from this trip to Canada, I shall not have to go abroad again—unless I elect to do so."

"Then you *are* pleased, Ronald?" Monica felt she must say something.

"I don't know. With another week, you might have got to know me sufficiently well to make up your mind on a certain matter. As it is, I must still be a comparative stranger to you."

Monica, when alarmed, had a queer, unaffected little way of clapping her hand to her heart. She made the gesture now. She remembered that she was acting for Winifred, and she perceived how inefficient an actress she was. It was her part to encourage Ronald, not to let him go empty away. She had a vision of Winifred, who was to give Dick Hartman his answer that night, waiting at the flat for her and her report. Now she had learned something definite, and surely sufficient to satisfy her cousin, of Ronald's position. Now, too, if she were honestly playing the game for Winifred, she must say something to the man beside her, something like this: "But after all, Ronald, you are quite an old friend."

And she said nothing at all. Her hand fell to her lap, her head drooped, and she sat there, a girl overwhelmed with shame for what had been and longing for what could never be.

Ronald drew nearer. "But I can't go away without telling you, though I have to wait for your answer for six weeks. Since ever I have known you I have loved you. Will you marry me—Winifred?"

Again her hand flew to her heart, and panic leapt in her blue eyes.

"Oh!" she whispered; "but I—I'm not Winifred."

Very gently came his answer: "I know. You are Monica."

Horrified, she stared; for a moment looked like fainting; and then, before he could put out a hand, she was up and speeding from the lounge.

V.

AT the entrance of her cousin, Winifred let fall her fan and sprang from the couch.

"Monica, what is the matter?"

Monica, ghostly white, pushed her away. "I've betrayed you," she gasped, "but I couldn't help it. I couldn't keep it up any longer, and when he—when he asked me to marry him, everything seemed to give way, and I—told him I was not Winifred."

"He asked you to marry him?" Winifred spoke as one under self-restraint. "And you told him you were not Winifred?"

"Yes—and he said he knew I was Monica! So, you see"—with a gulp—"everything has gone to pieces, as I feared it would. I can't think how he found out—but that doesn't matter. The name is nothing. It is you he wants. You have been in his heart all those years. You must marry him, Winifred—he has just had some splendid good fortune—I say, you *must* marry him. He was punishing me—mocking me—when he asked me! But I'm ready to confess that the trick was mine—a bit of fun to see if he really cared for you. You understand, Winifred? I'm ashamed of having betrayed you, but that will put it all right. Ring him up at the Midland Hotel, and tell him I've confessed everything. Then he will come here, and—and you——"

She stopped as though exhausted.

There was an unfamiliar tenderness—a seeming softness in Winifred's eyes. "My dear," she said, "I can't marry Ronald, even if he should ask me. Dick came this afternoon—could wait no longer, poor boy—and I promised to marry him."

A moment of silence, and Monica blazed out :—

"Then you have betrayed me!—you have betrayed Ronald!—oh, you have taken a good price for all you have done for me!—but mother and I will starve before we take another kindness! I've done with you, Winifred—done with the Planet—done with everything here! I'll be ready to go in half an hour. Oh, how could you—how could you?"

She stumbled to the door, paused there, tore from her breast the pale gold rose, threw it on the floor, and went out.

For a space Winifred stood very still; then she picked up the brooch, regarded it kindly, and laid it on the mantel. Thence she passed to the telephone.

Ten minutes passed, and Ronald was shown in. The moment was too tense for awkwardness, or for conventional greetings. They shook hands, a little coldly on his part, for he was scarcely thinking of her, and his anxiety just then was greater than his desire for explanations.

"I sent a message to the Midland Hotel a few minutes ago" she said.

"I have not been there since morning," he replied. "Winifred, you probably guess what brings me here now."

"You want to know the how and the why——"

"I want Monica."

Winifred nodded and smiled. "Isn't she the dearest thing that ever was?" she said.

"Yes," he answered simply. "I was going to tell her so, when she ran away."

"And will you tell her so before you receive any explanations?"

"Yes."

"Reminds one of old times," she remarked a little dryly, "but now it is the right impulse, Ronald. Tell me," she went on, kindly, "how you discovered that Winifred was really Monica."

"Almost from the beginning there were little things that set me wondering, but it was not till Tuesday that I knew. You may remember that Tuesday was wet. I used my overcoat for the first time since my visit to the Planet, on the night of my arrival in this country. There was a programme—unopened—in the pocket. Something made me open it, and a slip fell out, and I learned that Monica had, on that night, played the Princess."

"And you had fallen in love with her then, thinking she was Winifred?"

"Yes, Winifred."

"And before that you had been in love with—my name?"

"With the thought of you, Winifred. That, at least, is the only way I can explain it to myself." He reddened slightly.

"Well, you have been more faithful, Ronald, than I have deserved," she said. "But now that you have met the real Winifred again, you don't want to marry her—do you?"

"No."

She laughed. "You are splendid, and ever so much nicer than six years ago. Let us sit down." She took up her fan. "Ronald, you must tell me one thing. Do you blame Monica in any way?"

"I do not."

"Why?"

"It would be impossible to blame her unless I believed that she had taken the brooch unknown to you."

"So you believed I gave, or lent, her the brooch?"

"What else could I believe?"

"And your theory for my doing so?"

"Well, it's not easy to put it in so many words; but it's something like this. I don't think you intended to be brutal, but when the brooch came, you said to yourself: 'Oh, here's that sentimental boy back again!'—and you thought of a plan to confound me and, perhaps, make me laugh at myself in the end. And you got Monica, who didn't know me, to see the humorous side of it. How's that?"

"It's quite a good theory in its way," she returned, "though it makes me out a more horrid person than I really am. Here is the truth, Ronald. When I opened the case, and saw the little golden rose, I was dismayed, and said to myself: 'Either Ronald imagines he still cares, or he feels himself under the obligation of a boyish promise.' My first thought was to send the brooch back, for I was almost the engaged girl I now am, but there was no address with it. And while I was worrying Monica came in and fell to admiring it. And all at once the little plot came into my head. I love Monica, who is worth a dozen of me; and I've always been your friend, Ronald; and so there and then—I'm afraid I didn't see all the risks till afterwards—I decided to try to do you both a good turn. Which is the whole truth and nothing but the truth! And if you will shake hands on it, Ronald, I'll go and send the poor kid to you."

It may be mentioned that Ronald's grip was warmer than at their first hand-shake.

"You will understand, of course," she added, "that I had to do some acting to induce Monica to take the part. It wasn't so easy to persuade her. Monica, I'm afraid, will always be rather a poor actress."

"I beg your pardon!" said Ronald, drawing himself up. "In my opinion she was a splendid understudy!"

Winifred laughed and went to the door. Thence she turned back to the mantel and took up the pale gold rose.

"You must give it to Monica. It belongs to her, because she understands it better than I." With her little finger Winifred touched the diamond. "It is possible that you were right, Ronald, six years ago."

With a certain gentleness she laid it in his hand, gave him a glimpse of wet blue eyes, and went out quickly, leaving him wondering.

NEW STORIES of GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Fresh light on the operas which are now more popular than ever

With an unused song from "The Gondoliers"

MISS JESSIE BOND (Mrs. Lewis Ransome).

IT is forty-seven years since that wildly exciting morning when I received a telegram from Mr. R. D'Oyly Carte asking me if I would like to appear in comic opera. Unknown to my parents, who would have been shocked by such an idea, I went to London, and was engaged on the spot for three years.

To-day I am almost the last of the Savoyards, using the term in its strict sense, for, of course, it should only be applied to original members of the Savoy company. I created a leading *rôle* in all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas with the exception of "The Sorcerer."

I started, I remember, with a salary of three guineas a week, and terrific ambition. The top of the tree—that was the position I aimed at from the beginning.

My first part was that of Hebe, in "H.M.S. *Pinafore*." This was originally a speaking and singing part, but as I had had no experience of acting I asked Gilbert to omit the spoken lines. He did so, and Hebe's *rôle* has been a purely singing one ever since.

Of course I had a good deal to do with Gilbert, and he was always most considerate. But we did not invariably agree on the question of salary, and I sometimes wonder whether this led to my being partly responsible for the moulding of "The Gondoliers."

I imagined I was worth more as my popularity increased, and was courageous enough to suggest this to Gilbert. Generally, as a woman should, I had my own way, but one day he said there were some principals who thought they were responsible for the success of the opera, and he was going to put a stop to the whole thing.

"We'll have an opera," he exclaimed, "in which there will be no principal parts. No character shall stand out more prominently than another." Soon afterwards "The Gondoliers" was written, and, strangely enough, it was found to contain no *rôle* of outstanding importance.

Before the new work was rehearsed there was another discussion about my salary, and later I received a letter from Gilbert in which he said :—

"MY DEAR JESSIE,—

"*I am distressed to learn that you decline to renew under thirty pounds a week—distressed*

because, though nobody alive has a higher appreciation of your value as a most accomplished artiste than I, no consideration would induce me to consent to such a rise. While I do not forget how much of the success of our pieces has been due to you, you must not forget how much of your success has been due to the parts written for you by Sullivan and myself —you have been most carefully measured by both of us, and I think you will admit not unsuccessfully. . . . ."

But Gilbert reconsidered the matter, and the time came, indeed, when my salary reached the dizzy figures—for those days—of forty-five pounds a week.

During "The Gondoliers" rehearsals he was obviously annoyed with me. When I was due to enter the stage he would remark: "Make way for the high-salaried artiste." I was a little irritated, too, and decided to do nothing except what I was expressly ordered to do.

But at the final dress rehearsal before the first production I came out of my shell and showed what I proposed to do with my part. Gilbert was simply overjoyed. When the curtain went down he rushed to me and kissed me. "I had no idea so much could be done with Tessa," he exclaimed. "Then perhaps you think I am worth my salary," I replied, rather haughtily. Laughingly, he nodded his head.

The years passed on, and he wrote me lots of charming notes. Then came the announcement of my approaching marriage to Mr. Lewis Ransome. "You little fool!" he said to me when he heard the news. But I was ready with my reply. "I have often heard you say you don't like old women," I said. "I shall be old soon. Will you provide for me? You hesitate. Well, I'm going to a man who *will* provide for me."

Fifteen years later, at Grim's Dyke, his home at Harrow Weald, I asked him if he had forgiven me for leaving the theatre. "Let me see," he replied. "I must give you a wedding present," and sure enough there arrived at my house a beautiful silver bowl, inscribed with the names of all the parts I had played. It is still one of my most treasured possessions.

Of course, I often think of the old days. There was Grossmith, who had a very sensitive disposition, and was worried more than a little, I am afraid, by the "drilling" he received at the hands of Gilbert. There was also Rutland Barrington, who was irrepressible, and simply delighted in annoying me on the stage. One day he borrowed ten shillings from me, and he used to pay me back in penny instalments during the performances. Sometimes he would heat the coins and make me jump as he placed them in my hand. By way of a change he would drop them down my back.

When we had to roll about the stage in supposed agony after being sentenced to death in "The Mikado," the squeezing and slapping I received at his hands were almost unbearable, and it would have been worse if I had not threatened to complain to Gilbert.

The late King Edward, when Prince of Wales, took a keen interest in the operas, and occasionally went "behind." I was sewing in my dressing-room one night when Mr. Carte brought him in. He asked what I was doing and I told him. "Can I help you?" was his next question. "Thank you very much," I replied, "but I am afraid you would do more harm than good."

Soon afterwards I met him at a dinner party and he invited me to sit next to him. He discussed the operas, and ended by asking me to sing a certain song. When I told him it was not a solo but a duet, he replied: "Then I'll join you." But he never carried out his intention.

I am seventy-two now, and those days seem a long way off. But they have left me with the happiest memories.

J. M. GORDON (Producer to the D'Oyly Carte Opera Companies).

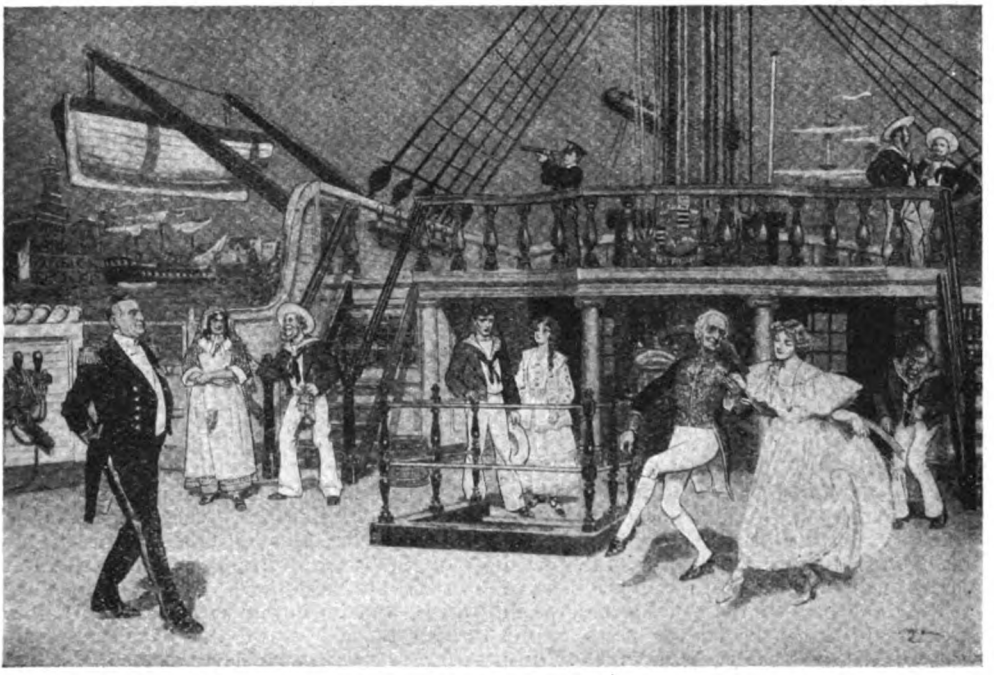
It was during a rehearsal of "Ruddigore" that I had a practical illustration of how perfectly Gilbert and Sullivan worked together. The first time Gilbert heard the musical setting of the chorus, "Hail the bridegroom, hail the bride," he was obviously disappointed with it. He went over it repeatedly with the girls of the chorus, trying different attitudes and styles of expression, but still he was dissatisfied. The music did not quite convey the atmosphere of the words.

Then I saw him have a few minutes' conversation with Sullivan, who was always present at these stage rehearsals. As soon as Sir Arthur grasped the situation he turned to the girls and asked them to add an *appoggiatura* (a sort of sliding note) to the last note of the chorus. The curious effect produced made everyone laugh, and Gilbert was eminently pleased.

"That's it!" he exclaimed. "That's excellent!"

The little alteration had changed the whole character of the music, and, incidentally, Sullivan proved once more that, in his own medium, he was as keenly alive to humorous possibilities as Gilbert was in his.

Sullivan always tried to put everybody at his ease during a musical rehearsal, but



"H.M.S. PINAFORE."

The First Lord, Josephine, and Captain Corcoran singing the famous trio: "Never mind the why and wherefore."

he once made an amusing *faux pas* in explaining how a certain song should be sung. "Come, come," he said to the singer. "Light and airy—Venetian, you know, not like a policeman on his beat."

The rest of the company exploded, for the stolid gentleman had only just left the police force, doubtless hoping that the beat of a conductor would be more congenial than the beat of a constable.

At a rehearsal of "The Mikado," Sullivan reminded singers of the necessity of avoiding a stilted manner. "Sing the music with the same ease on the first night," he said, "as you'll sing it after a hundred nights." Gilbert, who was standing near, evidently thought the opportunity too good to miss, for, in his facetious way, he remarked: "You're presuming, of course, that the opera will run for a hundred nights?" "The Mikado," of all operas!

COURTICE POUNDS.

Even as a youth I formed a very definite impression that the Gilbert and Sullivan operas stood miles above everything in that type of entertainment—that, in fact, to use an expressive modern phrase, they were "It." I decided that I must be identified with them at all costs, and—not, of course, without a certain amount of trouble—I duly found myself at the old Opera Comique as a member of the chorus.

I was only eighteen years of age, and naturally I felt a little nervous. I was among singers many of whom had had a grand opera and opera bouffe training, and knew their job well. A number of them, too, were men of position. There were a solicitor, a master tailor, a stockbroker, a master printer, and a watchmaker. They liked singing, though they did not disdain the weekly salary they received.

Some of them, I am afraid, did their best to frighten me. "Wait till Gilbert comes!" they told me, with a meaning kind of look. Gilbert came—the occasion was a first chorus rehearsal for "Patience"—and at the end of his visit I was still a member of the chorus, whereas some of the others were not. The fact was that, as Gilbert reminded us, we were to be dragoons and must have height. Those who fell short of the standard had to go. Gilbert would have what he wanted; he allowed nothing to stand in his way.

I was never content as one of the chorus, and was delighted when I was able to force Mr. D'Oyly Carte's hand by securing an engagement with the Moore and Burges-

Minstrels. In order to keep me Mr. Carte made me a principal and gave me a five years' agreement. After that I was brought into more intimate contact with the artistes who made themselves so famous at that time.

Sullivan often introduced subtle humorous effects in his music when he saw an opportunity. It is not generally known, for instance, that "The Gondoliers" originally contained a few bars of the well-known tune, "Yankee Doodle." These formed a sort of accompaniment to the words: "And be content with shoddy." Mrs. Ronalds, an American, and a great admirer of Sullivan's work, heard the familiar notes at a rehearsal, and immediately protested on the ground that Americans might be offended. Sullivan agreed, and omitted the bars.

Sir Arthur was always very proud of the overture to "The Yeomen of the Guard." He once remarked to me that it could be played at any symphony concert, and be a credit to it. I still remember the anxiety this opera gave me. I was anticipating with a certain amount of pride the privilege of creating the part of Colonel Fairfax, when Mr. D'Oyly Carte broke the news to me that Gilbert was not in favour of my engagement. He could not, as he put it, "see" me as Fairfax. He also told Mr. Carte that he wanted Mr. W. H. Denny to be the Jailer.

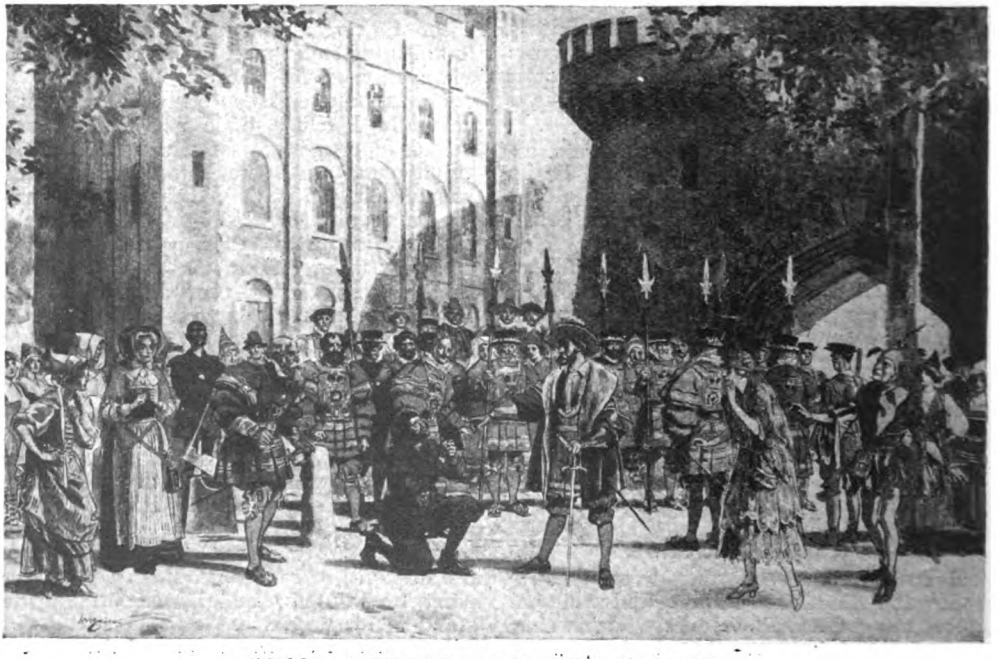
Thus began a little dispute which ended to my advantage. Mr. Carte did not approve of Denny as the Jailer, and, on the other hand, he wished me to be Fairfax. He solved the problem by telling Gilbert that he would agree to Denny if Gilbert would agree to me. A compromise was arranged on those lines, and I duly appeared.

Gilbert, if I may say so, was exceedingly pleased with my performance. He was extremely backward at paying compliments, but on one occasion he told me that I spoke like a good actor and on another that I was a born dancer.

At a private party at which some of us were guests he made another notable observation, remarking after I had sung something from one of the operas: "I know nothing about music, nor about voices, but I can hear my words." Nothing pleased him more than that.

It was at this party that I saw the first signs of the coming break between him and Sullivan. Brandon Thomas, afterwards of "Charley's Aunt" fame, was there, and he began to declaim to Gilbert about the glories of the partnership, and what priceless gems it had yielded.

"Yes," said Gilbert, "but under D'Oyly Carte's management I shall never collaborate with Sullivan again." This conversation occurred during the run of "The



"THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD."

This stirring scene shows the head jailer on his knees before the Lieutenant of the Tower after the discovery that Colonel Fairfax, on the morning he is to be beheaded, has escaped from his cell.

Yeomen of the Guard." It did not, fortunately, prove to be the last opera in which these geniuses worked together, but it was obvious, even then, that Gilbert had grievances, though not necessarily against Sullivan.

In due course Mr. Carte built the English Opera House, now the Palace Theatre. I incline to the view that this was the beginning of the end. The final parting was brought about, it was said, by a disputed bill for a carpet bought for the Savoy. It seemed a trifling thing, but I believe that Gilbert's opinion was that he should not be asked to contribute towards the cost of a carpet for an office in which business in connection with the Opera House was being done. Sullivan took the side of Mr. Carte, whereupon Gilbert —what a tragedy it was!—severed the partnership. Happily it was renewed after three years.

"THE GONDOLIERS."

The arrival in Venice of the Duke and Duchess of Plaza-Toro with their daughter Casilda—and their suite of one.

MISS ISABEL JAY (Mrs. Frank Curzon).

I do not think any part of my stage career yielded so much pleasure as my five years' association with the Savoy operas. There was not only the inexhaustible delight of singing wonderful music and libretti, but there was the remarkable and never-ending enthusiasm of the audiences.

I joined the company in 1897, while I was still a student at the Royal Academy of Music, and I remember how encouraged I was by the infectious enthusiasm of a Gilbert and Sullivan night For some time I toured the provinces, and at that period provincial theatre orchestras had not reached the level of the present day. We always had our own conductor with us, but no instrumentalists. Those he encountered in the various towns were the worry of his life. Often he sent all the members of the orchestra home, and accompanied us himself on a piano.

Of course my ambition was to play leading parts at the Savoy, and my chance came in "The Rose of Persia." Miss Ruth Vincent had been leading soprano, but for this opera Sir Arthur Sullivan suddenly expressed a desire that a certain Australian singer should take the leading part. After a few days, however, the new-comer was seized with an illness which obliged her to retire, and I was asked to assume the *rôle*.

Naturally I felt my responsibility, but Sir Arthur was kindness itself. He sent me a little note saying that if I desired he

would go through the music with me. I went to his flat in Victoria Street, and he spent the first few minutes in proudly showing me his book of reminiscences, which had just been published. After he had given me various hints about the music, I told him that I was very nervous, and that I should be eternally indebted to him if he would kindly keep away from the theatre on my first night. "With the greatest of pleasure," he said, in his usual charming way.

The next time I saw him he told me how well I had sung. "But you promised not to come to the theatre," I said. "Yes," he replied, "but you forget I have an electrophone in my house." Later, he strolled in one evening when I was appearing in "The Pirates of Penzance." Standing at the back of the gallery, he heard Mr. Robert Evett and me sing the celebrated duet in the second act, "Ah, leave me not to pine." He remarked afterwards, without the smallest suggestion of conceit, that he was proud to have written such music.

I have a picture before my mind's eye now of Sir William Gilbert (or Mr. Gilbert as he was then) being carried in to rehearsals. In the last years of his life he was racked with the pain of gout, yet he always gave masterly care to every detail, and never expressed his approval until everything was perfect.

A little incident that happened is worth recalling for the sake of its humorous side, and yet it is only amusing because times have changed so radically. I had to play the part of the plaintiff in "Trial by Jury," and I found that I had to produce a pair of silk stockings in court. Such a thing seemed to me to be shocking, and I appealed to Gilbert to allow me to omit that part of the proceedings.

To my relief Gilbert agreed; but I have often thought that the production of a pair of silk stockings would be regarded as a very mild adventure in the theatrical world of to-day.

HENRY A. LYTTON.

My active association with the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan dates back forty-two years. From the beginning, of course, they created remarkable interest. "First nights" were events of almost national importance, and I can still picture those newspaper boys rushing along the Strand with placards bearing the magic words: "New Savoy Production."

Yet, great as the interest in these operas was at that time, I have no hesitation in saying that it is greater still to-day.

"THE MIKADO."

This scene shows a grouping of all the characters in the costumes in which they appear in the second act.

Enthusiasm for them simply knows no bounds. We of the D'Oyly Carte company, touring from town to town, are constantly imagining that the limit has been reached, and just as constantly being provided with practical evidence that it has not. Records are made only to be quickly broken.

I think, too, that not only are Gilbert and Sullivan lovers growing in numbers—they are also keener. They are quicker to seize a point than ever, and it is some little tribute to the advance of education that one often sees mere children rocking with laughter at Gilbert's wit. Such a thing was far less common many years ago.

It is a remarkable thing—probably accounting in some measure for their continued success—that these operas are still given exactly as they were in the time of the two geniuses who created them. People sometimes tell me they are sure that this one or the other has been "cut" or altered, but they are mistaken. Nothing is ever touched, for where is the man who could touch these incomparable gems without spoiling them?

As a member of the old Savoy company I know something of the extraordinary pains taken to make these productions perfect. A good deal has been said and written about Gilbert's personal disposition. He certainly insisted upon having his own way, and made no secret of the fact. Moreover, he did not like fools. But he was always ready to make allowances if he saw evidence of a real desire to understand him and carry out his wishes.

"RUDDIGORE."

Robin Oakapple confronted by his ancestors, who step out from their frames and accuse him of not having carried out the daily crime necessary under the witch's curse which rests upon the family.

It was fatal to allow one's attention to wander for a moment when dealing with Gilbert. During a certain rehearsal I felt a little weary, and without thinking what I was doing I exclaimed: "But I haven't done that before, Sir William." "No," he dryly replied, "but I have," a subtle reminder to me of his habit of working everything out beforehand on the miniature stage at his home.

On another occasion I was rehearsing the part of Robin Oakapple, in "Ruddigore," which had had to be given up by George Grossmith owing to illness. Gilbert told me that at a certain point, after the words "Yes, uncle," I was to make my exit. As I did not understand exactly how I was to make my exit, I was bold enough to ask him.

Gilbert pretended to ponder very deeply over such a "difficult" problem, and then replied: "Oh, I should exit like a—well, like a nephew." What he meant was that I must use my intelligence, if I had any!

Probably few people are aware of the circumstances in which the hornpipe came to be introduced into "Ruddigore." Durward Lely was the tenor in the first production, and at the close of a rehearsal, under Sir Arthur Sullivan, of his song, "I shipped, d'ye see, in a revenue sloop," he struck an attitude as if to dance a hornpipe. Sullivan was all attention in a moment. "Could you do it, Lely?" he asked. Lely replied that he could, and immediately Sullivan sat down at the piano and played a hornpipe, which Lely soon learned to dance. It has remained ever since.

I shall not easily forget the last few nights of the productions at the Savoy. Both audience and company were affected by feelings of deep emotion. On one occasion, while Miss Isabel Jay and I were singing "None shall part us from each other" ("Iolanthe"), she broke down completely, and had to leave the stage. Many of the audience were in tears.

It was an eloquent indication of the sincere affection of the public for these operas. The stage can show nothing to equal it, and it almost seems as though it will go on to the end of time. Gilbert and Sullivan could have wished for no finer tribute than that.

MR. RUPERT D'OYLY CARTE.

[*Mr. D'Oyly Carte, with Lady Gilbert's permission, enables us to give our readers something of exceptional interest, namely, a characteristic song and scene which originally appeared in "The Gondoliers," but were later cut out by Gilbert, probably on the grounds that they were redundant and that there were two quintettes following each other. The dialogue is a continuation of the scene just before the finale of Act II., between Marco, Giuseppe, Casilda, Tessa, and Gianetta, and followed Casilda's line (which is now the cue for the quintette still used to-day): "My good girls, I don't blame you."*]

Here is the deleted scene, with its very Gilbertian lyric:—

CASILDA: . . . . . or we shall get hopelessly complicated.

MARCO: It's a difficult position. It's nobody's fault—let us treat it good-humouredly and make the best of it.

CASILDA: Oh, yes; let's make the best of it by all means.

TESSA AND GIANETTA: Certainly, let's make the best of it.

MARCO: Very well. It seems that we two have married you three. Now I have a proposition to make which I think will meet the difficulty

QUINTETTE.

Marco, Giuseppe, Casilda, Tessa, Gianetta.

MARCO:
Till time shall choose
To solve the hitch
Which wife is whose—
Whose wife is which,
Our three young brides must please agree
To act as one and not as three.

CAS., TES., GIANETTA:
Your three young brides hereby agree
To act as one, and not as three.
Then you must be, till that is done,
Two gentlemen rolled into one.

MARCO AND GIUSEPPE:
Then we will be, till that is done,
Two gentlemen rolled into one.

ALL:
Till time shall choose
To solve the hitch,
Which wife is whose—
Whose wife is which,
The three young brides hereby agree
To act as one and not as three;
And both their lords, till that is done,
Two gentlemen rolled into one!

GIA., TES., AND CAS. (speaking together): I think that is a very satisfactory arrangement.

MAR. AND GIU. (speaking together): Ingenious, isn't it, Jenny?

GIA., TES., CAS. (surprised): Jenny?

MAR. AND GIU: I must call you something you know.

GIA., TESSA, AND CAS.: Well, if you call me Jenny, I shall call you Thomas.

MAR. AND GIU.: Oh, hang it all—Tommaso!

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: No—Thomas.

MAR. AND GIU.: But it's so British!

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: Never mind that. The question is, will you always be true to me?

MAR. AND GIU.: My dear Jenny, can you doubt it?

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: Certainly. How can I trust a husband who married one-third of me when I was a baby and waited twenty years before he married the remainder?

MAR. AND GIU.: It does sound dilatory. Regard it as an instalment on account.

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: And now I come to think of it, you've only married two-thirds of me, after all.

MAR. AND GIU.: I've married as much as I might.

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: But I've married the whole of you!

MAR. AND GIU.: Pardon me—one-third of you is still single.

GIA., TES., AND CAS.: My dear Thomas, what is the use of one-third of me being single when I don't know which third it is!

QUINTETTE.

Marco, Giuseppe, Tessa, Gianetta, Casilda.

ALL: Here is a fix unprecedented! etc.

WORD OF HONOUR

By

"SAPPER" (H.C.McNEILE)

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

I.

JIMMY STAUNTON'S soldier servant smiled tolerantly behind a large hand as he produced the fourth evening collar for his master's inspection. Three had already been hurled into a corner with oaths and curses as unfit for a chimney-sweep to wear, and he waited patiently for the verdict on the last.

"What do they do with 'em, Wilton?" cried his master, despairingly. "The blamed thing looks like a pleated shirt."

His servant preserved a discreet silence as Staunton put it on; then he handed him a black tie. Few things are hidden from a man's personal batman, and Wilton realized the solemnity of the occasion.

So much so, in fact, that when Jimmy, complete with overcoat and hat, was ready to leave his room, he permitted himself with a perfectly inscrutable face to say, "Good luck, sir."

For a moment his master stared at him; then a slow grin spread over his face.

"Go to blazes."

"Very good, sir. Tea the same time to-morrow morning, sir?"

But the door had already slammed behind the departing Jimmy. Should he, or should he not? That was the question. Point for: he loved her, and he felt tolerably sure that she rather more than liked him. Points against: he had exactly one hundred and fifty pounds a year beside his pay, and she couldn't expect any more than that, even if she got as much, from her father. For Tiny Tim—the nickname by which the said father was known wherever soldiers were gathered together—was notoriously not blessed with an overflow of this world's goods.

Tiny Tim—or, to be more formal, Lieutenant-Colonel John Mayhew, C.M.G., D.S.O. and bar, etc.—was Jimmy's commanding officer. And Jimmy, in company with every other officer and man of the 1st Battalion of the King's Royal Loamshires, would have cheerfully lain down and let the Colonel walk over them if it would have afforded him any pleasure. And the trifling fact that the men felt the same about Jimmy is beside the point. All that occupied the mind of that worthy as he strode towards the C.O.'s quarters was, should he, or should he not? He knew there was no one else dining—Tiny Tim had told him so. He also knew that his host had some work to do after dinner which would take him about an hour. And as he stood on the doorstep waiting for the servant to answer his ring, he admitted to himself the futility of his mental argument. If he had an hour alone with Peggy there wasn't a hope.

She was alone when he went into the drawing-room, and his heart gave a quick bound forward as he saw her. What an utterly adorable girl she was: no wonder she was the apple of her father's eye. Especially since her mother had died. . . .

"Come back from leave at last, Peggy," he said, as he took her hand. "I'm thinking you've overstayed it badly."

"Three months, Jimmy," she answered. "And I'm off again the day after to-morrow."

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In spite of himself his face fell.

"The dickens you are," he said. "We'll have to get the C.O. to confine you to barracks."

And then Tiny Tim came in, and they went in to dinner. It was an informal meal such as the Colonel generally gave when he asked any of his unmarried officers in, and the conversation was of that intimate type—half shop, half sport, and wholly regiment—which seemed to come natural when Tiny Tim was present. Boring to an outsider, perhaps, but there were no outsiders there. And it was when the fish was being cleared away that it struck Jimmy that the girl was unusually silent. At first he thought it must be his imagination, until he saw her father glance at her once or twice with a worried look in his eyes.

The port was put on the table, and after it had been round once, Tiny Tim turned to her with a smile.

"Look here, Kitten," he said, "you run along, will you? I want to talk to Staunton for a few minutes. Very confidential shop."

Slightly surprised, Jimmy opened the door for her: what on earth could the C.O. want to say confidentially to him at such a time?

And when he'd sat down again and said "Yes, sir," politely, he got still more surprised. For Tiny Tim, who was usually the most direct of human beings, seemed to have considerable difficulty in beginning.

"What do you think of Peggy?" he blurted out, suddenly. "Do you think she's happy?"

Jimmy Staunton stared at him open-eyed.

"Good Lord, sir," he stammered, "I—er—hope so. She seemed a bit silent at dinner."

In silence, Tiny Tim pushed the port towards him.

"Jimmy—I'm worried," he said. "She's all I've got, and—she's changed. She's been away, as you know—staying most of the time with a cousin of mine, Lady Badderley. I wanted her to have a good time and all that. I went and stopped there for a couple of week-ends, and I dunno, but it struck me there was a pretty putrid crowd in the house. I'm not particularly old-fashioned; I can stomach all sorts and conditions of men—and women: but I'm not Peggy. I don't want her to get unsettled."

He broke off, and Jimmy sat silent, hardly knowing what he was expected to say.

"How's the work getting on for the Staff College?" said the Colonel, suddenly.

"Pretty well, sir. I'm sweating like blazes."

"For your ears alone, Jimmy," said Tiny Tim, "I gather I'm going to get a brigade."

"I should jolly well hope so!" cried Jimmy.

"Brigade-Major is not a bad stepping-stone," remarked Tiny Tim thoughtfully, and Jimmy grew red in the face. At last, incredible though it was, he began to see what his host was driving at.

"Don't forget I married on practically nothing beside my pay," went on Tiny Tim.

"Good Lord, sir," stammered Jimmy, "you mean that I—why—Great Scott! I just worship the ground she walks on."

Tiny Tim smiled.

"You surprise me, Jimmy. Er—why not tell her so?"

"But do you think—I mean—is there a chance for me?"

"Damnation!" exploded the Colonel, "you don't expect me to find out for you, do you?"

He rose and put his hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

"I want her to be happy, old man," he said, gruffly. "They're a rotten lot—some of those men she's been meeting—and she's young. Good luck. I can give her a little."

Without another word he walked out of the room, leaving Jimmy Staunton staring after him open-mouthed. Brigade-Major—and then if Tiny Tim got a Division, which he would—G.S.O.2, or perhaps even 1. He could afford it. With care to start with, it could be done.

ALMOST in a dream he found himself in the drawing-room. She was sitting smoking a cigarette as he came in, with her back towards him. And for a moment or two he stood by the door drinking her in—the proud little shingled head, the adorable shoulders, the whole wonderful attraction of her. Then, as he closed the door, she turned and looked at him.

"Hullo, Jimmy!" she said. "Finished your shop?"

"Yes," he answered. "The destiny of the British Army has been settled. Why are you going away so soon, Peggy?"

He was standing beside her, while she stared at the fire.

"I don't know," she said. "Aunt Vera asked me to come back."

"Find it dull here?"

"Dull!" Her voice shook a little. "I'd give everything I possess to stop here, Jimmy."

"But what's to prevent you, my dear?" It slipped out unconsciously, that "my dear." "The regiment don't think they're being treated at all well."

She gave a little shiver, but didn't speak.

"Peggy, is anything the matter?" He tried to keep his voice even; but it wasn't a conspicuous success. "I mean—if so, it

might help you to cough it up, old thing. Won't go beyond me, don't you know."

He bent down, and saw that her eyes were swimming with tears.

"My dear," he muttered, hoarsely. "Tell me."

"It's nothing, Jimmy," she said, getting up abruptly. "Don't let's worry about it. What shall we do? I've got a lot of new music——"

"Damn the new music," answered the man, quietly. "I want to know what the trouble is."

"There isn't any trouble," she said, defiantly.

"Then why were your eyes full of tears? Sit down again, Peggy—and get it off your chest. Two heads are better than one, old soul."

She drew in her breath sharply; then she pointed to a chair.

"Go and sit over there, Jimmy, and don't look at me. And swear—swear that you won't tell a soul."

"It's hardly necessary," he said, quietly. "But I give you my word of honour I'll tell no one."

FOR a time she sat in silence with her head averted; then, a little jerkily, she began to speak.

"I've been a fool, Jimmy—such a fool! It all started with a week-end party about six weeks ago. Aunt Vera had asked a lot of people down for a dance at a house a few miles away. The dance was on the Friday night, and they were all staying till Monday morning. Between them there were about half-a-dozen cars, so we all split up and went over in driblets. I was going with Aunt Vera, and then after dinner I tore my frock and had to go upstairs to get it mended. And when I came down Aunt Vera had gone, and all the other cars except one. It belonged to a Mr. Maxton—Paul Maxton—and he had waited specially for me. He'd been down a week-end previously, and I rather—liked him. At least I thought I did. He was a beautiful dancer and—oh! I don't know, Jimmy. I said I was a donkey, didn't I? He had a two-seater coupé, and we followed on after the rest of the party. In the car he started playing the fool, and I suppose I wasn't as angry as I ought to have been. Anyway, he kissed me."

She stole a quick glance at Jimmy Staunton, and then went on hurriedly. For that young gentleman's expression was not prepossessing.

"You see, I'm telling you everything, Jimmy—and I hate him now. We got there late, of course, and so more or less naturally we had a good many dances together. And he does dance divinely. And when it was over, I don't know how he managed it, but I found myself going back with him in his car. I suppose, to be fair, I ought to admit that I didn't try to go in one of the others.

"Jimmy—it was horrible—that drive home. He—oh! I can't tell you what it was like. I'm not an innocent little fool—girls aren't these days. But it was so utterly unexpected: I'd never dreamed for a moment that he was going to behave as he did. And then."—her voice was low—"he asked me where my room was."

A strangled grunt came from the chair opposite, but its occupant said nothing.

"It was then I smacked his face as hard as I could. And I don't think I've ever seen a man look quite so surprised in all my life. For a moment or two he sat there staring at me, and then he smiled quite politely.

"'I deserve it, Peggy,' he said. 'Please forgive me and forget all about it.'

"And we drove on home without another word being spoken. Next day he was perfectly charming, and—oh! don't misunderstand me, Jimmy—I began to feel a little bit guilty. You know yourself that there are ways and ways of dancing, and the night before I had been a bit excited. And then I'd let him kiss me, and—oh! I don't know. But I sort of felt that what had happened in the car on the way home was partly my fault. And so when he came to me that afternoon—it was pouring with rain—and suggested that we should play bridge, I didn't refuse. He knew I played, and he knew I wasn't bad—so there was no excuse I could give for not doing so. Besides, I did feel, as I tell you, a little guilty.

"'You and I,' he said, 'will take on Singleton and Mrs. Talby. And we'll wallop their heads off.'

"Oh, Lord, Jimmy—what an ass I was! I can play bridge—family bridge, or when some of you come in to dine—pretty well. But I ought to have known! I ought to have stopped. Captain Singleton and Mrs. Talby, as I found out afterwards, had played together for years. I was absolutely outclassed, and in addition to that I did hold the most terrible cards. And all through that afternoon we went on losing steadily—my partner and I. In fact, we were nearly four thousand points down when the dressing bell went for dinner. And I got up wondering if I had got two pounds left in my bag upstairs. You see, I'd never thought of asking what we were playing for. We always play sixpence a hundred here, and I sort of assumed that the stakes wouldn't be more than a shilling.

"'I'll square up, Miss Mayhew,' said my partner, 'and you can settle with me later.'

"So after dinner—we were dancing to a

"You see, I'm telling you" quick glance at Jimmy Staunton,

gramophone—I asked him how much I owed him.

"'Look here,' he said, 'you had the most rotten luck to-day. Why not let's take them on again to-morrow, and get some of it back? You simply couldn't hold those foul cards for two days in succession. There's "Tea-for-Two." Let's go and dance.'

"So we went and danced, and I didn't bother any more. I'd found a five-pound note that I'd forgotten about upstairs, so there was nothing to worry about, as I thought. And when it started to pour on Sunday worse than ever, I was quite ready for my revenge. Jimmy, if anything the cards went worse. Every finesse went wrong, and when I did have a good hand it didn't fit in with my partner's. We lost and lost and lost, and big rubbers too. Doubles went wrong, and twice we were redoubled, and our opponents pulled it off. I was absolutely frightened to look at the score sheet, but I did when we stopped play. Jimmy, we were six thousand five hundred points down: over ten thousand points in two days. However, that was a fiver at a shilling a hundred, and luckily I had it with me.

"It was after dinner again that I tackled Mr. Maxton, and insisted on knowing what I owed him.

everything, Jimmy." She stole a and then went on hurriedly.

"'It's the limit,' he said, ruefully. 'I've played bridge for years, and I have never known such a run of inhuman luck. Do you know that yesterday and to-day we have played twenty-five rubbers and only won two? Now, as to settling up—I'll let you know.' He produced his note-book. 'Ten thousand three hundred points down, and twenty-one rubbers on balance—that's two hundred and eight pounds. One hundred and three for the points, and a hundred and five for the rubbers.'

"Jimmy, I nearly fainted. I just sat there staring at him blankly, with my poor little fiver clutched in my hand. For a few moments the shock was so paralyzing that I could hardly grasp it.

"'But what were we playing for?' said a voice I dimly recognized as my own.

"'The usual stakes,' he answered, rather surprised. 'A pound a hundred, and a fiver on the rubber. But if by any chance it's inconvenient for you to write a cheque for that now, there's no hurry. I've squared up with Singleton and Mrs. Talby. Let it

stand over for as long as you like, and send me a cheque when it's convenient.'

"I didn't say anything: I was still too dazed. Two hundred and eight pounds!

"'In fact, I insist,' I heard him say. 'As a matter of form, and to make it quite in order, give me an IOU.'

"'It's very good of you,' I heard myself saying, as I signed my name to the paper he held out. 'I'll send you the money as soon as I can.'

"'Don't hurry, Peggy,' he insisted. 'Between friends such trifles don't count.'

"And that was six weeks ago. Jimmy! What am I to do?"

Jimmy Staunton stirred restlessly in his chair.

"What's happened since then, Peggy?" he said. "I suppose you've seen Maxton again?"

She nodded her head miserably.

"He's been down for two week-ends," she answered. "Last Sunday was the second. And, Jimmy, he was still very nice about it when he first arrived, but on Sunday evening he got me alone. And"—she covered her face with her hands—"he wasn't nice about it any more."

"What do you mean?" said Staunton, hoarsely.

Her face still covered with her hands, he only just heard her whispered: "Jimmy, can't you guess?"

And the next moment Staunton was on his feet, white to the lips and shaking.

"The swine!" he stammered. "The ungodly swine! Peggy! Peggy! Look at me, dear. You haven't——"

She looked at him instantly.

"No, dear. But—but—he wants to know this next week-end."

"But, Peggy, my dear," he cried, hoarsely, "you're not even dreaming of doing what this foul sweep suggests? Tell him to go to blazes."

"How I wish I could, Jimmy," she said, with a little twisted smile. "Oh! the mask is off the brute now—he knows he's got me. 'You smacked my face once,' he said to me. 'The IOU's yours if you don't smack it again.' But if I do, do you suppose I don't know what will happen? Do you suppose he'll keep that IOU to himself? Everyone will know, and everyone will think the worst. He'll see to that. Oh, Jimmy—what am I to do? I *can't* ask Daddy. I *won't* ask him. I haven't told you that—but he made me promise I wouldn't play cards while I was away. And you know what he thinks of anyone who breaks their word. It would just break his faith in me. Besides—he's so awfully hard up just now, I know."

And suddenly she gave a little gasp, for Staunton was kneeling beside her with his arms round her and his face touching hers.

"I love you, Peggy," he whispered. "I adore you. Thank God you've told me! I'll give you the two hundred pounds to-morrow."

"Jimmy, my dear," she cried, "but you're mad. You haven't got two hundred pounds. And, anyway——"

"I'll give you the two hundred pounds to-morrow," he repeated, steadily, "and you'll go and spend the week-end with Lady Badderley. And in her presence, Peggy, you'll hand over the money to this ineffable swab, stating what it's for. Then come back here, my dear, and we'll burn that IOU together. And when you've come back I want to ask you a question."

Before she could answer she heard the door close behind him. And Tiny Tim coming in a quarter of an hour later, and finding her alone, sighed a little sadly. For not unnaturally he placed a totally wrong construction on the situation, though he said nothing about it to Peggy.

II.

JIMMY STAUNTON had spoken with his eyes open to what he was saying. He knew that his own bank balance consisted of exactly eighteen pounds; he knew that he had no possible method of raising the money in the time—save one. And he knew exactly what that one method entailed. It was a court-martial offence, with certain cashiering as the result—if he was found out.

In every military unit there are certain funds which consist—not of the public money, but of money subscribed by officers and men for various purposes. There are the profits from the canteen and the regimental institute; there are subscriptions for cricket, football, shooting prizes, and other things of a like type. And the officer who is responsible for these funds is the second-in-command.

Now the second-in-command—Major Peterson—was on leave, and was not returning for six weeks. And during his absence Jimmy was acting for him. He was empowered to write cheques and pay in moneys to the bank. In fact, he was in complete charge of the accounts, and there was no one to say him "nay" or raise any questions till the quarterly audit, which would take place on Major Peterson's return.

It was not the first time Jimmy had acted in this capacity, and he knew to a nicety how that audit was conducted. Every item in the regimental books was inspected, and the balance arrived at. Then from the balance in hand at the bank was subtracted any unpresented cheques, and if the two

figures tallied—as they always did—the audit was over. But Jimmy had never known a detailed inspection of the pass-book; quite naturally it was deemed unnecessary. Moreover, he knew that the pass-book was very near completion, and that by the time Peterson returned a new one would have been started. Given three weeks he could raise the money from his father, who was at the moment in Canada. And the two unexplainable entries of a hundred and ninety pounds drawn out and paid back later would probably never be seen. If they were—but Jimmy refused to let himself think about that. It had to be done; it was the only possible way. No one knew better than he did the ghastly risk; the chance of the old pass-book being looked at—the possibility of the bank manager casually mentioning the matter to Peterson one day. But it *had* to be done.

AND it was a perfectly calm and self-possessed young officer who presented a cheque for a hundred and ninety pounds over the counter of Barclays Bank the next morning.

"A large cheque, Mr. Staunton," said the cashier, raising his eyebrows a little.

"It is a bit," agreed Jimmy. "But I want the money handy for prizes. We're having a big show at the ranges shortly."

When he returned the money he was going to say the show hadn't come off.

"Let's hope you have better weather," said the cashier. "Any fivers?"

"All in pound notes," said Jimmy. "I should only have to change the fivers."

Fivers, as he knew, had their numbers taken, and if he returned different notes it was going to look suspicious.

With the notes in his pocket he left the bank, and going up the street he entered another where he was unknown. And there he exchanged the Treasury notes for tenners. Assuredly, he reflected grimly to himself, a career of crime had its complications. And after that he returned to lunch in the mess. As far as he could see he had taken every precaution that it was humanly possible for him to take to avoid being found out, but he was far too clear-thinking an individual not to realize that the risk of detection was still enormous. One casual remark from the cashier at Barclays Bank, and the whole thing was bound to come out. And then—finish.

He sent the notes plus his own eighteen pounds with a little covering letter to Peggy that afternoon. It was a stilted effusion; somehow Jimmy felt numbed and dazed. The one dominant thought in his mind, that at all costs she must be saved, was jumbled up in his mind with the almost unbelievable fact that he—the product of a line of soldiers—had done what he had. He lied to her, of course; said an aunt had sent him two hundred and fifty pounds—more power to her elbow. Said it was just their secret. Re-wrote it all four times, in the intervals of gazing dumbly out of the window.

"Wait for an answer," he told Wilton, when at last he'd sealed it up.

It came, and he read it over and over again.

"My dear, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Come and ask me that question when I get back next week.—Peggy."

And that was a Thursday. On Saturday morning the telephone in his office rang, and the pay sergeant answered it.

"Adjutant's compliments, sir, and the C.O. wishes to see you at once in the orderly room."

For a moment or two Staunton stared at the N.C.O. almost uncomprehendingly. Impossible, of course; Tiny Tim couldn't have found out. And yet his mouth was so dry as he reached for his hat that he could only nod his reply.

He crossed the barrack square, entered the orderly room, and saluted. And as he left the door and advanced to Tiny Tim's desk, the Adjutant rose and left the office. And Jimmy Staunton's mouth was drier still. That fact always meant he was on the mat for something serious, apart from the look on Tiny Tim's face. It was stern and set, and his eyes were expressionless.

"I have sent for you, Staunton," he said, quietly, "to ask if you have any explanation to offer with regard to a most extraordinary item in the regimental accounts."

For a moment Jimmy's heart stood still; then he stiffened, even his nose, rigidly to attention. The suspense was over; he knew he'd been found out.

"Quite by chance," went on the C.O., "I met the manager of Barclays Bank dining out last night. And he said to me in the course of conversation that he hoped we should have a successful rifle meeting. I asked him what he meant, as we had no intention of having anything of the sort. He then told me that the cashier had told him that you had drawn a cheque for a hundred and ninety pounds on Thursday morning for the purpose of prizes at this meeting, and that the reason why the cashier had mentioned it to him was on account of the largeness of the amount. I was dumbfounded, naturally, and requested him to send up the pass-book this morning. I have it here, with the entry in question. And I would like your explanation."

"I have no explanation, sir," said Jimmy steadily.

"No explanation?" said the Colonel, sternly. "You *must* have an explanation for drawing a cheque for a hundred and ninety pounds on the regimental funds. What have you done with the money?"

Jimmy Staunton drew a deep breath. Just for a second he wavered; career, ambition, everything he had lived for—against his promise.

Then: "I have spent it, sir."

"My God!" muttered Tiny Tim, "I can't believe it. You, Staunton—you, of all men. What have you spent it on?"

"Betting, sir," said Jimmy, without a falter. "I've owed a bookmaker for months, and he threatened to write to you if I didn't pay up before next Monday. I would like to say, also, sir, that in three weeks from now I would have returned the money."

"Everybody who steals is always under that impression," said the Colonel, harshly. "I presume you realize what this means, Mr. Staunton?"

"Perfectly, sir," answered Jimmy.

"It means a court-martial for you, with cashiering as the inevitable result."

For a moment Jimmy stared at the face of the man sitting at the side of the table, and it was grey and drawn. For a moment there came again temptation well-nigh overwhelming to tell him the truth. Cashiered! God! what would his father say? The indelible disgrace of it! With blinding clearness he saw the future stretching out in front of him, a future without hope and with the shadow of the thing that had happened always hanging over him. And then quite clearly and distinctly his own words rang through his brain—"I promise that I'll tell no one."

Least of all her father. It was out of the question: it couldn't be done. And then he realized that Tiny Tim was speaking again.

"If you can replace this money in three weeks, why haven't you obtained it before to pay this bookmaker? You tell me you've owed him for months. You've let it drift, I suppose, and then after what I said to you on Wednesday night you decided that something had to be done. Thank God my daughter refused you."

He wasn't looking at Jimmy, so he didn't see the look of amazement that showed for a moment on his face.

"Listen, Staunton; I'm failing in my duty, I know. But I can't have your father's son cashiered. You will go back to your quarters and send in your papers at once. You will then go on leave, until your resignation is approved. I will replace this money at once, telling the manager at the bank that you withdrew it under a misapprehension. You can send me a cheque for it—when you're able. And I need hardly add that you are to make no attempt in the future to communicate with my daughter. That will do."

Without a word Jimmy Staunton saluted, and turned blindly towards the door. It was the end, and he blundered past the Adjutant, who was standing about outside, without even seeing him.

"What the devil has happened?" muttered that worthy officer to himself, as he watched Jimmy's progress across the square. "He can't have been drinking."

And his amazement was not lessened when he entered the orderly room, and had a momentary glimpse of Tiny Tim sitting hunched up in his chair with his face covered with his hands.

III.

IT was the Adjutant who first told Peggy that Jimmy Staunton was on leave. They had hacked out together to a meet not far from the barracks, and as hounds were moving off she had remarked on his absence.

"On leave!" she echoed, staring at him. "For how long?"

"The C.O. granted him two months," said the Adjutant, as he shortened one of his leathers.

"But—I didn't know he intended to go on leave," she said.

"It was rather sudden," agreed the Adjutant. "For your ears alone, Miss Mayhew, I think there's been a bit of trouble. Jimmy had a confidential interview with your father and left the orderly room walking as if he were tight. And the Colonel hasn't been his usual self since."

"I thought Daddy was worried at dinner last night," she said, slowly.

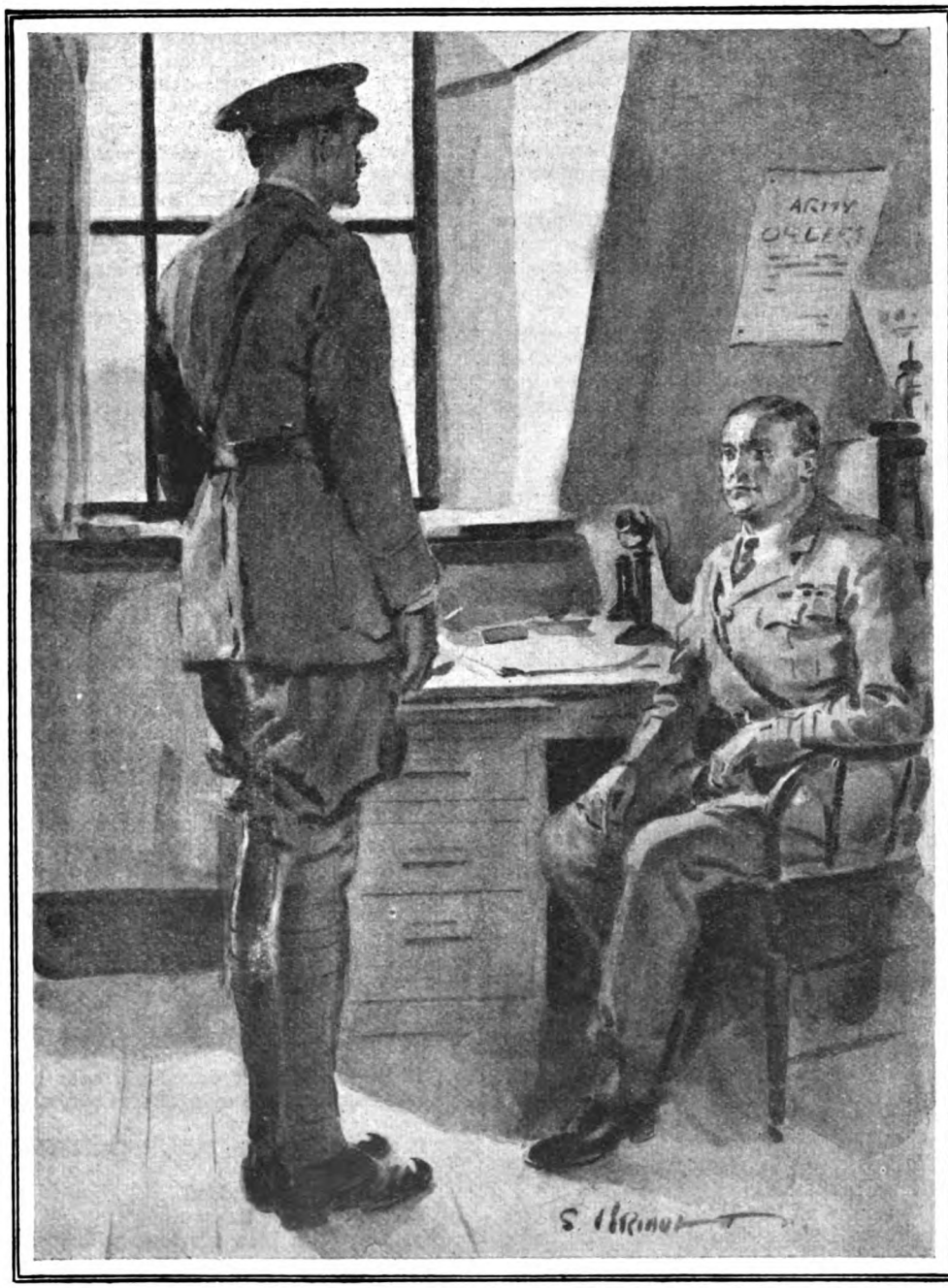
"And further—still more for your ears alone," went on the Adjutant gravely, "the most amazing rumour has reached me through the regimental sergeant-major. He's got a pal who is chief clerk at Divisional Headquarters, and the devil of it is that his rumours have never been far out before. He tells me that Jimmy has sent in his papers."

"What?" cried the girl, and every vestige of colour had left her face.

"I can hardly believe it," he said; "but that's what the regimental said to me yesterday morning after guard mounting. And, as I said, I've never known him wrong."

"But why?" she cried. "What can have induced him to do such a thing?"

"Ask me another," remarked her companion. "He was sweating like blazes for the Staff College. Of course, it may be a complete *canard*. I certainly told the regimental he was talking rot."



For a moment Jimmy's heart stood still; then he stiffened rigidly to attention. The suspense was over; he knew he'd been found out.

"But surely you must *know*, Captain Sykes?" she said, desperately. "Anything of that sort would go through you."

"His application for leave did, of course," answered the Adjutant. "But nothing else. If it is the truth—which God forbid!—it must have gone direct to the C.O."

And the next moment he was staring blankly at the retreating figure of a girl going back to barracks on a justly-enraged horse.

"TINY—stop eating, and answer some questions."

Tiny Tim looked up from his solitary luncheon at his daughter, who had just burst into the room like a typhoon

"Why has Jimmy gone on leave?"

"For reasons, my dear," said her father, quietly, "into which I do not propose to enter."

"For reasons, Daddy, into which you've *got* to enter," said his daughter, equally quietly. "In case you don't know it, I'm going to marry him."

Her father stared at her blankly.

"I thought you'd refused him," he muttered. "Anyway, Peggy," he went on sternly, "you may dismiss any such idea from your mind at once. I absolutely forbid it."

"Why?" she remarked, ominously. "I have a right to know."

"So be it," said her father. "Staunton has been guilty of a crime only less culpable in an officer than cowardice. For his father's sake I spared him being cashiered, and have allowed him to resign his commission."

"I don't believe it," she cried, proudly.

"Unfortunately he admits it," said her father.

"What has he done? You *must* tell me, Daddy."

For a while he hesitated, then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Embezzling battalion money to pay his betting losses," he said, briefly. "Now you know."

"Oh, my God!" It was scarcely more than breathed.

"He was in charge of the regimental funds while Peterson was on leave, and he proceeded to steal a hundred and ninety pounds."

"When did he do it?" she asked, steadily.

"The point seems immaterial," he remarked. "But if you want to know, it was the day after he dined here—Thursday last."

"Immaterial!" she said, with a little sob. "Oh, Jimmy, my dear——"

She stood up suddenly, slim and erect in her riding habit.

"Get into mufti, Tiny; we've just got time to catch the two-thirty. You know Jimmy's address, don't you?"

"What do you want to do?" said her father, staring at her amazed.

She flung her arms round his neck.

"Daddy, dear—there's been the most ghastly mistake. Only do what I ask, and you'll see. It doesn't matter what you were going to do this afternoon; everything else must wait."

And because Tiny Tim was a man of understanding, he said nothing to her going up in the train, but read *Truth* with great concentration. They took a taxi, and they went to an address somewhere in Bloomsbury, and all that he noticed was that Peggy's eyes were full of a wonderful light.

He was sitting at the table, was Jimmy, when they entered the room—his head on his arm. And Tiny Tim, looking over the girl's shoulder, saw the hopelessness fade out of his face, as he looked up at the sound of the door opening. She went straight up to him and kissed him on the lips.

"My darling," she said, quite steadily. "My darling boy."

"Peggy," stammered Jimmy, getting to his feet. "Peggy—is it all right?"

For a moment Tiny Tim was forgotten as he stood by the door.

"Quite all right, my dear," she answered. "So you've been betting, have you, Jimmy?" She faltered for a moment: then she turned to her father.

"There was once a fool of a girl, Tiny—who went away to stop with one of her father's cousins. And there she met a swine of a man, with whom she was idiot enough to play the fool—and bridge. And when she'd lost steadily for two days she found that instead of playing a shilling a hundred, as she thought, they'd been playing a pound a hundred and a fiver on the rubber. He paid her losses—two hundred and eight pounds—and she gave him an IOU.

"He knew she couldn't pay, and so he made a very definite suggestion as to the method of wiping off the debt. And because she'd promised her father not to play cards, she was afraid of asking him for the money. And because she dearly loved someone else she told him, and made him promise not to pass it on. That someone else told her he'd just had some money left him by an aunt—and she believed him."

With a sob she sat down and over her shaking shoulders the eyes of the two men met.

"Is that the truth, Jimmy?" said Tiny Tim, gruffly.

Jimmy Staunton nodded.

"Yes, sir. That's the truth."

And Tiny Tim blew his nose with great violence.

"You blithering pair of young asses," he fumed. "You're absolute idiots—both of you. You're neither of you fit to be allowed loose."

He stumped up and down the room.

"Your leave is cancelled, Mr. Staunton. You will report at barracks to-night by the last train, bringing my daughter with you. Personally I'm going down to see the G.O.C.

She faltered for a moment: then she turned to her father.
" There was once a fool of a girl——"

at once to discuss that resignation of yours. He's still in his office, thank Heaven! I shall tell him—everything."

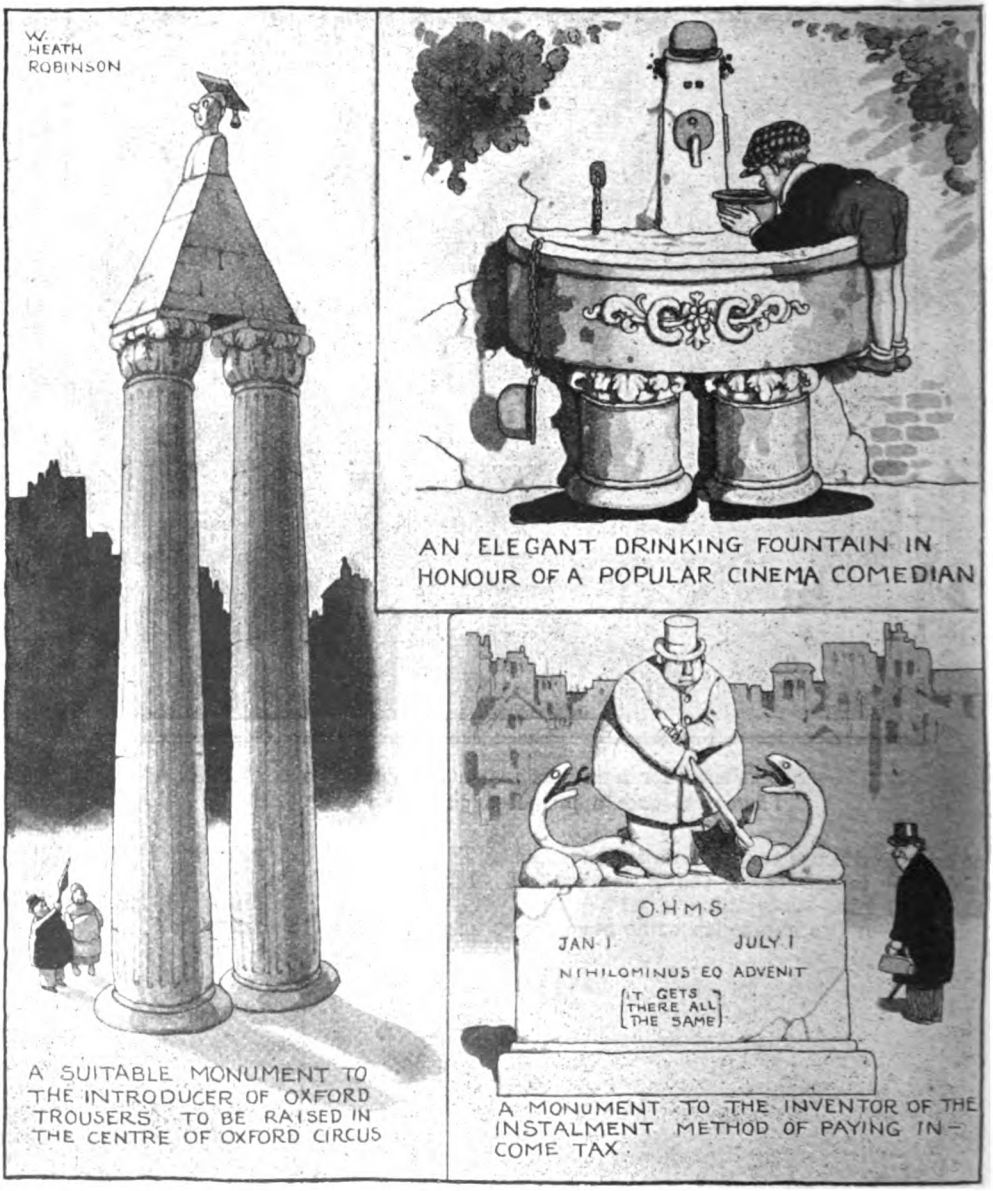
And then the expression came over Tiny Tim's face which had made men follow him to their deaths.

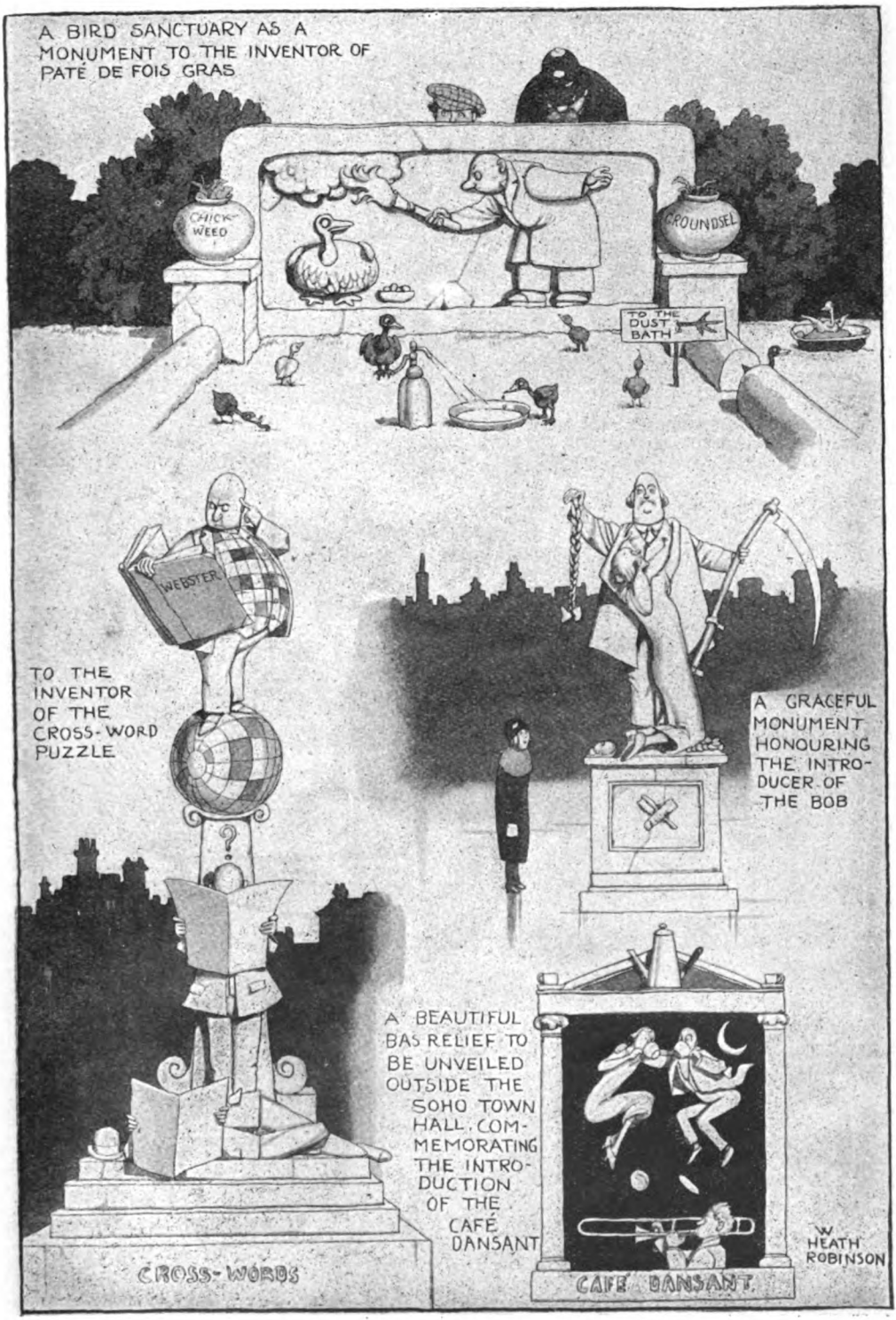
" Dear boy," he muttered, and his voice came shaking, " I thank you."

If I were a Sculptor—

By

W. HEATH ROBINSON




A BIRD SANCTUARY AS A MONUMENT TO THE INVENTOR OF PATÉ DE FOIS GRAS
CHICK-WEED
GROUNDSEL
TO THE DUST BATH
TO THE INVENTOR OF THE CROSS-WORD PUZZLE
WEBSTER
A GRACEFUL MONUMENT HONOURING THE INTRODUCER OF THE BOB
A BEAUTIFUL BAS RELIEF TO BE UNVEILED OUTSIDE THE SOHO TOWN HALL COMMEMORATING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CAFÉ DANSANT
CROSS-WORDS
CAFE DANSANT
W HEATH ROBINSON

AN IMPOSING MONUMENT FOR THE STRAND COMMEMORATING THE COMPLETION OF ROAD REPAIRS AND REMOVAL OF ALL OBSTACLES TO TRAFFIC

A MUCH NEEDED RECOGNITION TO THE LONG-SUFFERING MAN IN THE STREET

A BEAUTIFUL MEDALLION FOR THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MEDICINE COMMEMORATING THE FIRST CONCEPTION OF THE TABLOID

A MEMORIAL TABLET TO THE INTRODUCER OF THE COCKTAIL

Important Announcements for 1926

STORIES BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

The first of these, to appear next month, is

A NEW ADVENTURE OF

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Another great attraction will be . . .

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The Autobiography left by the celebrated author of "King Solomon's Mines," "She," and many other thrilling novels relates the romantic story of his adventurous life, and tells how these tales came to be written—with stories of famous people and letters never before published

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Gilbert Frankau
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Roland Pertwee
P. G. Wodehouse

Puzzles with the Christmas Dessert

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

THE following puzzles originated in the most natural way conceivable, for they arose out of the conversation over a Christmas dinner table. The party consisted of Major Garnford, the host; Mrs. Garnford; their son Maurice, a young architect; their daughter Vere, a pretty girl of modern inclinations combined with a modest demeanour; Bernard Dalston, a young solicitor, and nephew of the Major, with his wife Beatrice and their son Harry, a boy still at school; Dr. Preston, the local general practitioner, whose liking for Vere was beyond all doubt. So you see it was just one of those pleasant homely gatherings to be found in hundreds of our English homes during the season of peace and goodwill.

It was during the dessert, when one of the company had been plying another with a series of questions, that the Major set the ball rolling down the path of Puzzledom.

TWENTY QUESTIONS.

"I AM reminded," said Garnford, "of an interesting old game I used to play as a bachelor. Somebody thinks of an object—say Big Ben, or the knocker on the front door, or the gong of the clock in the next room, or the top button of his friend's coat, or Mr. Baldwin's tobacco-pipe. You have then to discover the object, by putting not more than twenty questions, each of which must be answered by 'yes' or 'no.' You have to word your questions discreetly, because if you ask, for example, 'Is it animal, vegetable, or mineral?' you might get the unsatisfactory answer 'Yes,' and so waste a question. We found that the expert rarely failed to get an exact solution, and I have known some most remarkably difficult cases solved by the twenty questions."

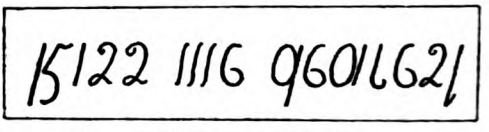
"Shall we give it a trial?" said Mrs. Dalston.

"Certainly," said the Major, "and a novel limitation of the game has just occurred to me, which will call for some ingenuity, and the puzzle will doubtless be attacked in various ways by different persons. It is simply this. I have thought of a number containing six figures. Can you discover what it is by putting to me twenty questions, each of which can only be answered by 'yes' or 'no'? After the twentieth question you must give the number. It is best that one person alone should be responsible for the questions, so I propose that they shall all be put by Dr. Preston."

There was a short discussion as to the best way of framing the questions, and then the Doctor proceeded with his inquisition, which was successful. If the reader asks his friend to think of some six-figure number he cannot fail to find the game entertaining.

CUPID'S ARITHMETIC.

"I WONDER what you can make of this?" said Vere, producing the jumble of figures shown in our illustration. "A young mathematician had this poser



presented to him by his betrothed when she was in a playful mood.

"'What am I to do with it?' he asked.

"'Just interpret its meaning,' she replied. 'If it is properly regarded, it should not be very difficult for you to decipher.'

"It did not take him long, I am told, to read it, and I believe she received her reward."

A GAME WITH MATCHES.

"HERE is an interesting little game," said Dalston, "with matches. You see I have laid fifteen matches on the table in five groups of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 matches respectively. Two players, playing alternately, take any number of matches from any one of the groups until the last match goes to the loser. I will say at

once that the first player can always win if he plays correctly, but perhaps it is not so very easy to discover the correct line of play."

Several of the company proceeded to play games with their neighbours, with varying results. I think the second players won as frequently as the first, but Dalston showed them in the end the correct winning line of play for the first player.

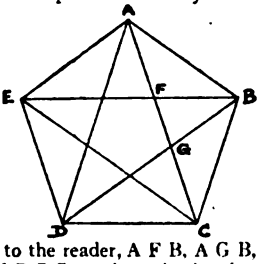
AGE PUZZLE.

"HERE is a puzzle," said Harry, "that I have been trying to solve lately without success. A man had nine children, all born at regular intervals, and the sum of the squares of their ages was equal to the square of his own. What was the age of each?"

Maurice was the first to give the answer.

COUNTING THE TRIANGLES.

MRS. GARNFORD drew roughly on a piece of paper a pentagon, and connected each point with every other point by straight lines as shown in our diagram.



"I want to know," she said, "how many different triangles are contained in this figure. I have made the count over and over again, but every time I get a different result."

To make it quite clear to the reader, A F B, A G B, A C B, B F G, B F C, and B G C are six such triangles. It is not a difficult count if you proceed with some method, but otherwise you are likely to drop triangles or include some more than once.

A MUSICAL PUZZLE.

"I THINK," said Maurice, "that this little example of musical scoring will interest some of you, for I believe most of us have some sort of acquaintance with the elements of music." (See our illustration.) "I am strongly inclined to think that much of our modern music is not only scored in a manner that makes it unnecessarily difficult to read, but that it is intentionally so written It is difficult to understand why this should be done, but it is so often impossible to believe that the composer could not have written in a simpler manner had he so chosen. This example will explain what I mean. Can you promptly read it? If so, you can hardly fail to be amused. The air is a very familiar one."

They certainly had a good laugh when they succeeded in interpreting this curiously cryptic scoring.

WORD STAIRS.

"LET me show you," said Mrs. Dalston, "a puzzle proposed to me by my friend Patrick Nye-Turner. It was suggested to him by some Word Chain puzzles in one of our magazines, and he calls it 'Word Stairs.'"

She wrote words on a slip of paper in this manner:—

SHRIMP
IMPAIR
AIRWAY,
WAYLAY
LAYMAN, etc.

"Every word must contain six letters, and the first three letters in each successive word must be the same as the last three letters in the previous word. My friend says that he has constructed a 'stair' with over a hundred risers, and I gather that the feat is not difficult. But a new condition has occurred to me. Can you form a 'stair' containing ten different words and an eleventh which is the same as the first? In fact, I might call it a Word 'Ring.' The only difficulty will be found to consist in getting back to the first word at exactly the stage stipulated."

Several of the company succeeded in constructing their "stairs" successfully.

THREE MOTOR-CARS.

"HERE is a puzzle," said Dr. Preston, "that I will not ask the ladies to attempt, but I know it will interest the Major and my friend Dalston in particular. Maurice might like also to have a shot at it, but I think it is a little too difficult for Harry. Three motor-cars travelling along a road in the same direction are, at a certain moment, in the following positions in relation to one another. Andrews is a certain distance behind Brookes, and Carter is twice that distance in front of Brookes. Each car travels at its own uniform rate of speed, with the result that Andrews passes Brookes in seven minutes and passes Carter five minutes later. Now, in how many minutes after Andrews would Brookes pass Carter?"

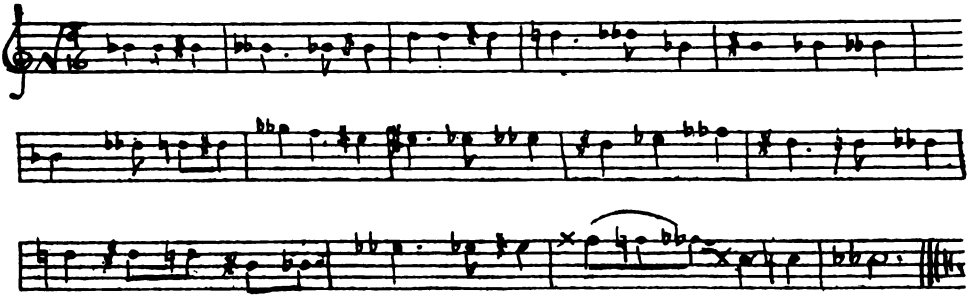
The men agreed to suspend their investigations of this little problem.

AN ENIGMA.

"HERE is a little enigma for you," said Vere.

"If you take the whole away,
Always some behind will stay.
If but some you take, you'll find
That then the whole remains behind."

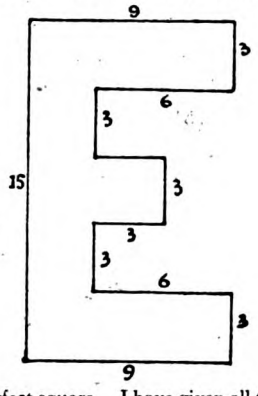
This did not give them much trouble, and the answer amused them a good deal.



Puzzles with the Christmas Dessert

DISSECTING THE LETTER E.

HARRY asked them if they could cut this letter E into only five pieces so that they would fit together



to form a perfect square. I have given all the measurements in inches so that there should be no doubt as to the correct proportions of the letter.

A CHARADE.

MRS. GARNFORD then asked the company if they cou'd give her the answer to the following charade, which she had been told appeared in the eighteenth century.

My *first* is a stream which meandering glides
Through meadows with verdure fresh crown'd;
My *second's* a path which your footstep oft guides,
And near to my *first* may be found!
My *whole* is a seat where the muses retire,
And Apollo has taken his station;
Where, aided by science, they jointly conspire
To form brilliant men for this nation!

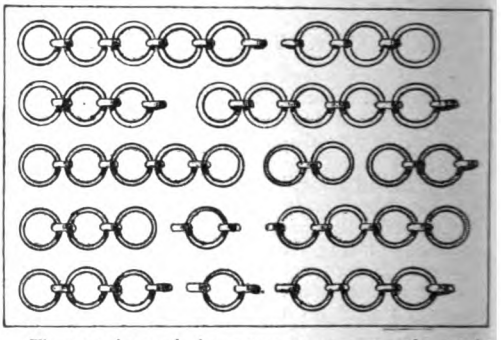
They got the answer to this in a very few minutes.

A CHAIN PUZZLE.

"I HAVE been very interested," said Mrs. Dalston, "in a little extension of an old chain puzzle that appeared some few years ago. A man has eighty links of old chain in thirteen fragments as shown here." (See our illustration.) "It will cost him 1d. to open a link and 2d. to weld one together again. What is the lowest price it must cost him to join all the pieces together so as to form an endless chain?"

"I should think," said the Major, "it would be cheaper for the man to buy a new chain."

"Well," said Mrs. Dalston, "I will leave you to decide the point. A new chain will cost him 3s. What is the cheapest method of procedure? Remember that the large and small links must run alternately.



The members of the company were too hasty in coming to their decisions, and they were very interested when the lady showed them the cheapest possible method.

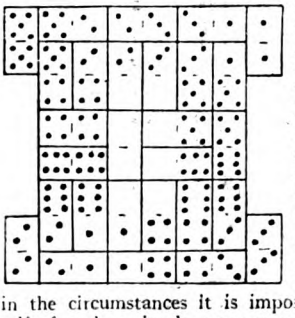
This puzzle is the last one that was examined that evening.

(Solutions to the above puzzles, together with some new "Perplexities," will appear next month.)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST MONTH'S PERPLEXITIES.

777.—LES QUADRILLES.

THE illustration shows a correct solution, the two blank squares being on the inside. If in the example shown last month all the numbers had not happened to be found somewhere on the edge, it would have been an easy matter, for we should have had merely to exchange that missing number with a blank wherever found. There would thus have been no puzzle. But in the circumstances it is impossible to avail oneself of such a simple manœuvre.



778.—SQUARES AND CUBES.

THE solution in the smallest possible numbers appears to be this:—

$10^2 - 6^2 = 100 - 36 = 64 = 4^3$.
$10^3 - 6^3 = 1000 - 216 = 784 = 28^2$.

779.—MULTIPLICATION DATES.

ACCORDING to my own enumeration there are 214 different dates in this century in which the day multiplied by the month equals the year. The most fruitful year in the century was last year, when we had the following seven cases: 24/1/24, 12/2/24, 2/12/24, 8/3/24, 3/8/24, 6/4/24, 4/6/24. It will be seen that one has to select a year containing as many factors as possible. 1960 would also have given seven cases if there had happened to be thirty days in February, so that we could write 30/2/60, and in 1972, and similarly in a few other cases, we fail to get more than six days.

780.—ODDS AND EVENS.

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If the reader will work out each of these little sums in simple division he will find that they fulfil all the conditions required by the asterisks and O's and E's.

781.—BURIED ANIMALS.

THE seven buried words in their order are: ermine, monkey, beaver, zebra, ostrich, weasel, baboon.

Oh!
What a feast
is here!
BIRD'S
CUSTARD
Creamy
& Egg-like.

TEACH HER THE EASY RINSO WAY

Put her on the right road

Put her on the right road early. Take the weekly wash for instance. Before the coming of Rinso this used to be the hardest of all your tasks, but your little girl need never experience such drudgery if you show her how Rinso soaks out dirt without hard, back-aching scrubbing.

Put her on the easy Rinso road now. The years ahead will be far, far happier for her, if she has your experience to guide her on the way.

Rinso

Rinso can be used for boiling—just as well as for soaking

In two sizes: Large carton for full-size wash; smaller carton for ordinary wash

TEACH HER THE EASY RINSO WAY

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